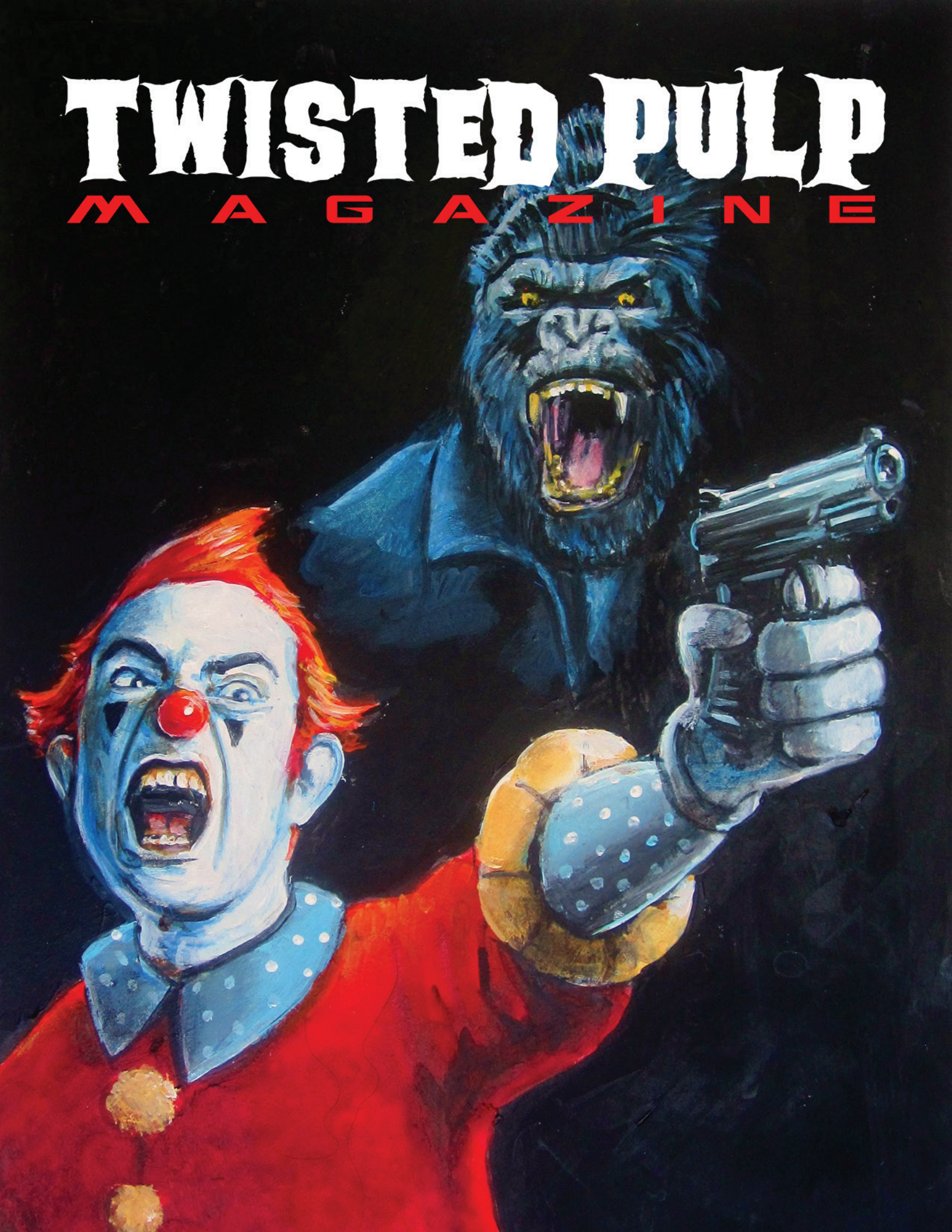
TWISTED PULP

MAGAZINE



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THE MAIDEN VOYAGE EDITORIAL

By Chauncey Haworth

I have a terrible habit of investing myself in things that I either don't have time for or that hold no chance of making me rich. Every once in awhile, when the stars perfectly align, I find a project that fulfills both criteria.

I remember when newspapers died, most people had their eyes on the future, but not me. I thought, "Hey, now would be a great time to start a newspaper" and for some reason that died. I remember when they said radio was dead, most people looked to the internet, but not me. I thought, "Hey, I should start a radio show!" Luckily, that one has worked out a bit better.

While this may seem like a sob story or some sort of depreciation, it is not. What it is, is a love story. A love for all things forgotten and rejected.

Growing up in the punk scene I used to like to think of myself as a nonconformist. As I got older, I realized that I was neither a punk nor a nonconformist… I'm an anticonformist.

If the world thinks it's dumb, I think it's worth taking a look at. If the world finds it obsolete, I find it necessary for a truly happy life.

There is something about kitsch, something about camp. These words convey poor, cheap, and lame to other people. To me, they convey doing the best people can with the tools at their disposal. Great art wasn't made in graphic design shops by professionals, it was made on the streets by struggling artists with crayons like Jean-Michel Basquiat. Great stories weren't written in the publishing houses they are printed from, they were written by striving writers, writing for thirty minutes before having to put another dime in the paid typewriter like Ray Bradbury.

So where is the struggle today? In the world's richest country, in a world of computers and convenience, where is that struggle?

It's in finding the time, of which I have little, but I chose to spend it here. I hope you find our struggle worth it.

Mondays, 10:00pm–11:00pm (pst)
on KKRN.org
and
88.5 FM in Northern California

A Post-Apocalyptic, Twisted Pulp Interview with Donald J. Trump… and Donald J. Trump.

By Dr. Mary Von Rocksprocket

Hello, not-so-dear readers! This is Dr. Mary Von Rocksprocket, in my underground bunker, hiding from the destruction of the world that occurred when all the nuclear and social unrest style shit hit the fan, splattered all over everyone in liquid form (filled with maggots), entered our noses, ears, mouths, and… well you get the idea. I am now, breaking out of my radio imprisonment and finally moving into a more respected medium for communication: Journalism! The only downside is you can't hear my laughter that I will now have to type out like a rabid tapir! HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA! But the upside is that my assistant Tiffany won't be able to interrupt! Or attempt to kill me within these pages… Wait while I double-check the lock on the door. Ah ha! Secure!!!!

Twisted Pulp is not quite the bastion of rigorous ethics and methodology that I once experienced in academia but then, what is these days? And, of course, that was before I lost my tenure due to the chinchilla / hooker / psychologist / drug dealer hybridization experiments. Narrow-minded idiots! Who doesn't want a soft and furry, sexually available, person who will listen to all of your narcissistic ramblings while giving you drugs I ask you? Hmm!? HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA-HA!

Now, where was I? Damn…

Ah, Journalism! Yes! The respected 4th Estate that will keep the world from… oh… they didn't do such a good job now did they? HAHAHAHAHAHAHA!

Well, we will do better here dear Readers! Here, at Twisted Pulp, we will expose the truth behind Fish-Worship! We will track the wild SPAM beasts! We will distill the fermented fluids from the pineal glands of wasteland-wandering partisan politicians to create the most potent hallucinogenic substances in existence! HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!

And today, we begin with an interview! An interview

with someone… well, two someones… both claiming to be President Donald J. Trump!

Dr. Mary Von Rocksprocket (MVR): President Trump and… President Trump, with so many people dead, as either carbon shadows or chemical goo, when all of civilization screwed the pooch it is amazing that you survived… and that there are now two of you—

Donald J. Trump I (Trump I): (interrupting)… Not really... Not really Mary. May I call you Mary? And why aren't you a woman? When I agreed to this interview it was because I thought you were a young, sexy, German lady.

MVR: No. I'm a man. My father named me Mary.

Donald J Trump II (Trump II): So, you're not a transsexual?

MVR: No!!!! Haven't you ever heard "A Boy Named Sue?"

Trump I: Of course. The Man in Black was a great American.

MVR: We can definitely agree on that! HAHAHAHAHAHA!

Trump II: We think you're a very strange man.

MVR: You. Have. No. Idea!!!! HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA! Anyway! So, you were explaining how you survived World War III and why there are two Donald J. Trumps.

Trump I: Yes. You see, not only do I have Dragon Energy, I have a mixture of Planarian and Cockroach Blood. I injected that mixture, and bleach, into my veins on a regular basis for years before the apocalypse that was caused by Rosie O'Donnell reenacting her role as "Sheila" from Exit to Eden.

MVR: I'm going to have nightmares now that you have mentioned that! (Yelling off microphone) TIFFANY! Make sure I have lots of melatonin for tonight! And bourbon!

Trump II: Yes. Rosie O'Donnell caused the end of the world as we know it and she is the reason there are two of me.

MVR: Do tell.

Trump I: Well, after I was reelected, with a huge landslide in both popular and electoral votes—

MVR: I don't remember that ever happening.

Trump II: That's because of the fallout. It's been affecting people's memories and their ability to digest processed cheese products.

MVR: That… actually… that explains more than a few Velveeta incidents I've had. HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!

Trump I: I'm going to call you "Moronic Mary" from now on. M'kay?

[Edited note: Tiffany here readers… I like what Donny called him. I'm editing this piece now and the idiot formerly known as Dr. Mary Von Rocksprocket will now be called "Moron" in the transcript below! Yay!!!!]

Moron: I… NOBODY TALKS TO ME LIKE THAT!

Trump II: And, I am both somebody and nobody… because nobody's perfect. And I am hugely perfect.

Moron: I… That hurt my brain. Please continue with your story.

Trump I: As I was saying, after my landslide reelection, O'Donnell became even more unhinged than she had been previously. She dressed up as an extremely obese dominatrix, kidnapped me with the help of 1,000 boxing kangaroos, and held me captive. With ransom demands.

Moron: What was she demanding?

Trump II: She wanted me to dress up as Baby Huey and say, "I'm Sorry" while being sprayed with orange paint by Joy Behar. I of course refused. I don't negotiate with terrorists. Or horrible, harpies.

Moron: That sounds… insane! Even by my standards! HAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!

Trump I: That woman is completely batshit crazy, yes she is.

Trump II: But it was during this time that the world

didn't have my leadership… and that's what caused everything to break down.

Trump I: That's right! If I had been there we would still be living in the best of all possible, and AMERICAN, worlds.

Moron: Fascinating! But, how did this end with you being, well… two?

Trump II: She finally snapped. After days of trying to break my spirit (and let me tell you, better people than her have tried… like all of my ex-wives), she took a chainsaw and sliced me right down the middle.

Moron: How did you react to her brandishing such a weapon. I'm pretty sure I would soil my labcoat. And I might have already done that earlier. HAHAHAHA-HAHAHA!

Trump I: That explains the smell. No, I just looked the horrible, horrible, woman in the eye and said, "Bring it on! I'm the Duke of New York! A-Number-One! The Big Man!"

Trump II: And that's when I became aware… right after she cut him in half.

Trump I: We quickly healed up and took her down.

Moron: This is, frankly, unbelievable.

Trump II: That's because you are a moron. Mary. Not a very nice man.

Moron: Tiffany! I can hear you laughing! Stop it!

Trump I: We split into two and became even more awesome than we were when we were one.

Trump II: And now I can refer to myself as the "Royal We" without looking weird.

Moron: I wonder what it would be like to have two of… ME!

Trump I: Well, I can tell you about one major benefit.

Moron: Please!

Trump II: Back when I was in college, I was playing a Yoga drinking game.

Moron: A what?

Trump I: It's like Twister but it's good for your health and your soul. Anyway, my friend Randy Roy convinced me to try sticking both of my thumbs up my ass at the same time.

Moron: Eeep!

Trump II: Which I did. Because I'm absolutely excellent.

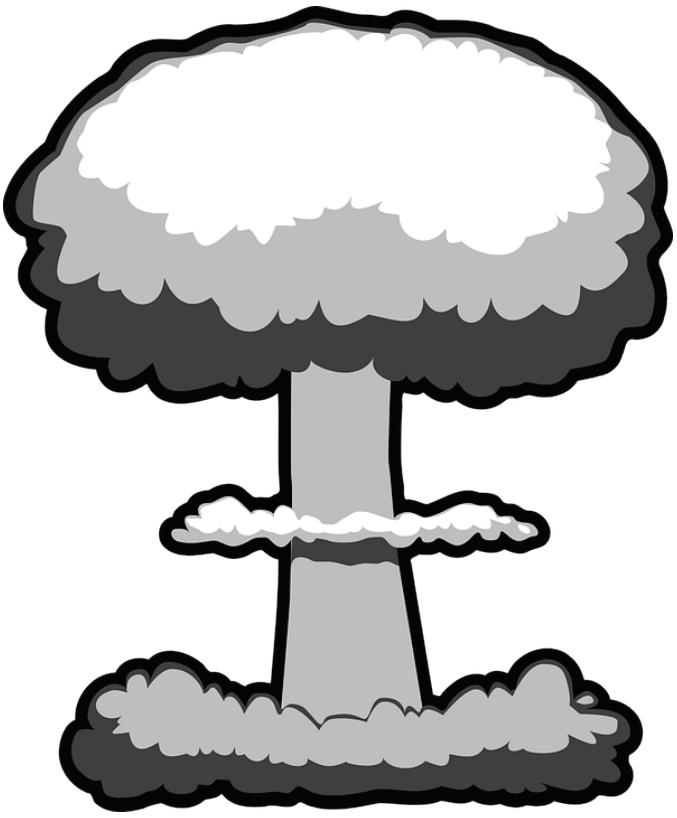
Trump I: But it was hard. I wasn't able to spend time enjoying it as much as I would have liked.

Moron: I can only imagine (and I'm not sure I'll ever be able to NOT imagine this now).

Trump II: Now, we can do this for each other. As much as we want.

Trump I: We have added it to our MAGA platform: "Make Ass-Play Great Again."

Moron: I…. I think that is all we have time for this issue. Thank you President Trumps for the exclusive interview. And, if I don't succumb to drinking industrial strength cleaner-degreaser from the visions this interview has conjured up, I'll back next issue for more hard-hitting, rigorous JOURNALISM as only Dr. Mary Von Rocksprocket [MORON] can bring you! HAHA-HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!



THE TRUTH FROM DUBBA DADDLY

(THE WORLD'S BIGGEST LIAR)

You know, a lot of people don't believe me when I say, "I was there."

A few weeks ago, I just happened to go into a lounge-type bar, just to kill time while I was staying in a hotel in Oklahoma. The place was completely empty except the bartender, a fortyish woman with pink hair and silver sideburns. I swear she was wearing a wig. One guy in a suit was slumped over at the bar nursing a tropical zombie.

You just won't believe who was sitting there!

Adolf Hitler.

I swear on my mother's grave. He was sitting there moaning and groaning about the state of the world today. How no one seems to like each other and can't see each other's side.

He said, "Why can't we just love each other?"

Oh you say he's been dead all these years and if he was alive, how can I understand German? Well, I just can. I can't speak it. Like a lot of languages, I just understand human language. I asked him how he's still alive.

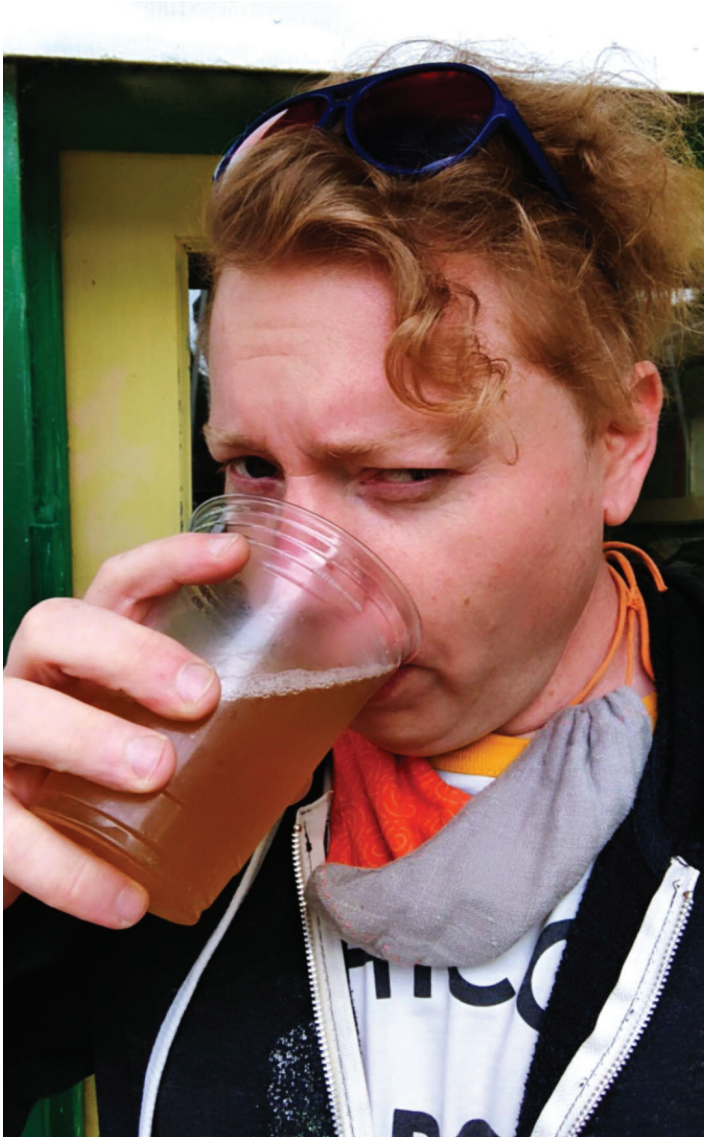
He said, "The government has been giving me Clorox treatments to keep me alive."

I said, "Come on, Adolf. The U.S. Government is keeping you alive? For what?"

He said, "Advice on world affairs. Alas," he sighed, drank his Tropical Zombie. "I'm at a loss anymore."

I said, "So, what are you doing in Oklahoma?"

"Oh, I'm here for the Trump Rally."



WILLY WONKA

Part 1

By Rob Lowe
(Not that Rob Lowe)

Willy Wonka Part I

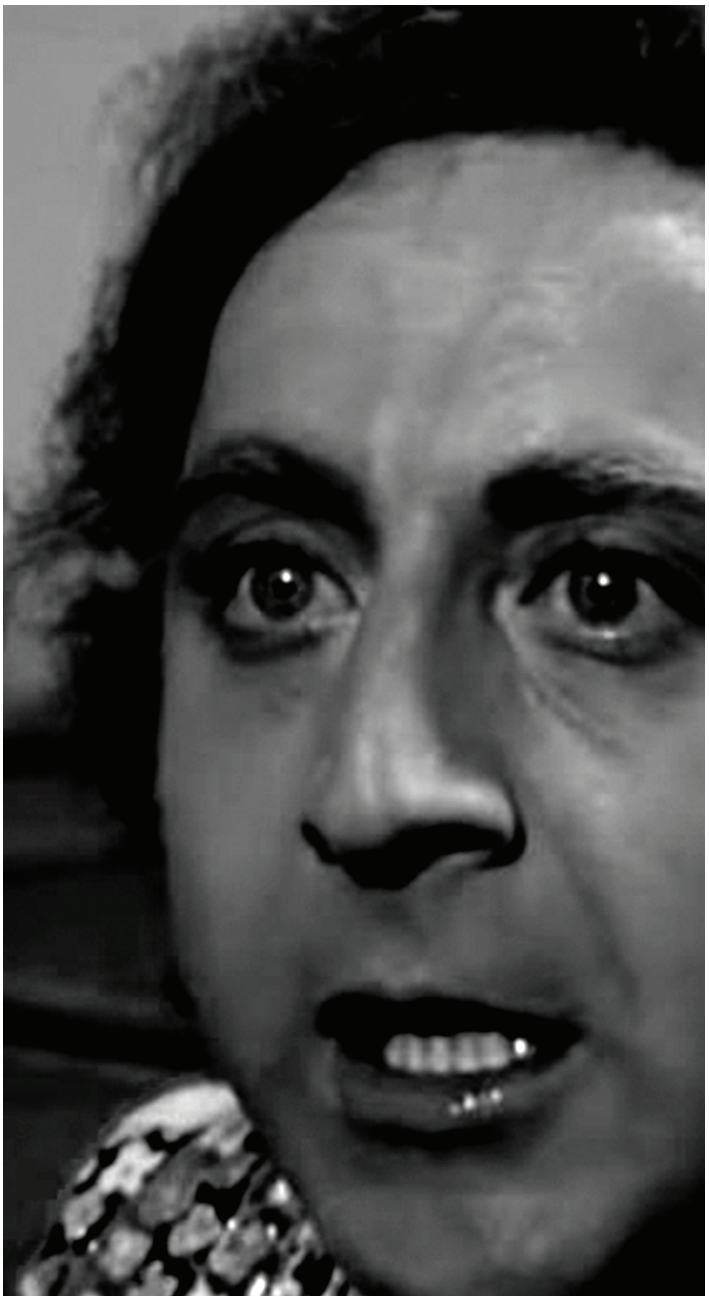
By Rob Lowe (Not that Rob Lowe)

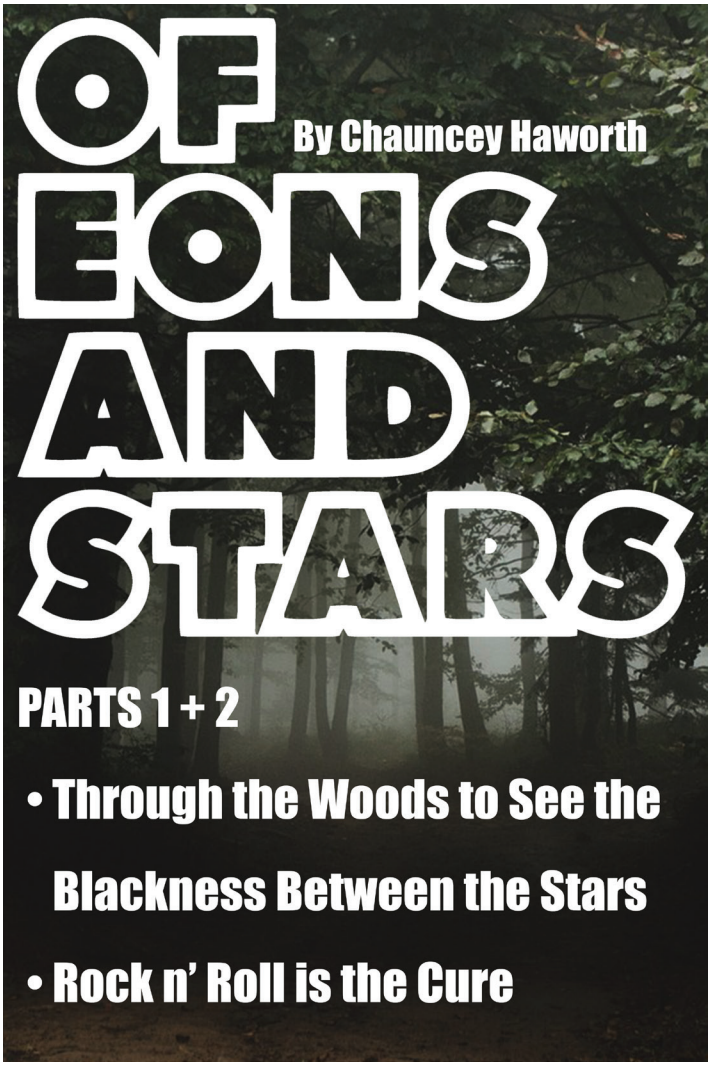
We currently are living in the #speakout movement and many stories have come out about many celebrities. There are some stories unfortunately that will go unnoticed. Some stories that will get pushed aside. I recently talked with someone who has tried to speak out about his story but nobody will listen. His name is Larry Furgenstien. Larry was born with dwarfism and was teased about it his whole life. He ran away at the young age of thirteen where he found other people with dwarfism. They formed a mini colony under an overpass off of I-95 in South Carolina. They were doing well for themselves until one day a limo pulled up. Out of the limo steps a man in plaid colorful pants, a purple jacket, a yellow top hat, and crazy hair. His name. Was Willy Wonka. Yes Willy Wonka—the same man who has graced us with candy for generations. This is part 1 of my interview.

Larry told me, "He (Wonka) came up to us and smiled and said he wanted to help us. And that if we came with him that he would provide us with shelter and food. So, of course, we went with him! We were tired of living under that damn overpass! We thought this guy might look crazy but hey its a place to live." Willy Wonka took all thirty of the little people to his factory as they looked out the windows in awe. Larry said, "We couldn't believe it! On the car ride over he was telling us that he works at his own factory and makes his own candy by hand. We didn't quite believe him at first until we got to the gates and saw his name on the building." At that point the limo stopped behind the factory and that is when all hell broke loose.

"The limo just kept driving around to the back of the factory. My buddy Ron at the time piped up and asked, 'why aren't we going through the front?' Wonka just let out a little giggle as we pulled around back where about ten of these guys in suits and sunglasses were standing. At that point I knew we were in trouble." Larry began to cry as he told this part of the story. He told me that the door opened as Wonka instructed all of them to remain seated. He saw Wonka go up to one of the men who was wearing regular glasses and not sunglasses. He whispered something to him and walked away into the factory. The men then surrounded the car and the man with the glasses ordered them all to get out of the vehicle. Larry went on to say, "Of course, we refused because we knew something was up. Then he reached into the car and grabbed my buddy Ron by the legs and yanked him out. We all started screaming and the car door was slammed shut. The driver locked up the doors and opened the sun roof as a can of sleep gas was tossed in. We all panicked but the roof was shut already. I looked out the window and all ten of those men were beating the shit out of Ron. I haven't seen him since."

After that bit Larry needed a small break. He was crying hysterically about losing his friend. He told me that they used to play Care Bears together. Join me next time as we dive deeper into the story that is Larry Furgenstien.




OF EONS AND STARS
By Chauncey Haworth
PARTS 1 + 2
• Through the Woods to See the Blackness Between the Stars
• Rock n' Roll is the Cure

OF EONS AND STARS

By Chauncey Haworth

PART 001: THROUGH THE WOODS TO SEE THE BLACKNESS BETWEEN THE STARS

Angelica Whateley drives her brown beater of a car through the narrow backroads of Kingsport. The trees are full and green, curling over what can barely be called a paved road, making the early evening's twilight all the darker.

She thinks to herself that the beauty of it could easily be an opening scene to a horror film or the closing scene of a romance. She reaches back and gives herself a pat for the depth of the observation then fumbles for her phone, swerving a bit as she struggles to wake it. She fumbles again to find the record button with another swerve, then taps it and clumsily tosses the phone onto the passenger seat.

"The beauty of it could easily be an opening scene to a horror film or the closing scene of a romance," she says loudly while leaning the upper half of her body towards the phone.

"Gotta remember that one," She continues out loud to herself, "okay, so I'm driving to see some new hot indie band called Ivan Rocket… through God knows where? Somewhere off to the side of the middle of nowhere in Kingsport. What am I expecting?" she rhetorically asks herself. She pauses.

"What am I expecting?" she monotonously asks herself, glancing up at the rearview mirror catching her own eye.

She talks aloud towards the phone. "Okay, so this guy is known for his spiritual kinda performances and I know that I am here due to my fucking dad and that my last name being Whateley… the paper thinks that will sell the article to readers. If I want out of this shadow, I need to take those readers' eyes and change them from looking at the name to looking at the music. I will change their minds. This will happen."

She cynically repeats the phrase in a chant as though a mantra to herself. She repeats it again with purpose.

"I will change their minds. This will happen."

Ahead she sees some balloons and a sign on a fence post that says, "ONE MORE MILE – TURN RIGHT AT OLD HAY FLAT ROAD – LOOK FOR THE TENT".

As she speeds by the balloons she hears the percussive hollow slapping of inflated rubber versus rubber and decides to slow down before she pisses off the locals.

She spends a moment staring ahead admiring the beauty.

"My god, how long does it take to drive one stupid mile at 30 miles an hour?" she thinks to herself. She contemplates doing the math, then decides that it's not worth it, then does it anyway. "If 60 miles an hour is one minute a mile, then 30 is…"

"Two minutes!" She shouts. "This is either the longest

two minutes ever or I seriously need to learn to just relax for a sec."

Ahead she sees a splash of color. It's more balloons.

As she approaches, she sees the signs. First the street sign, "Old Hayflat Rd". Then another flyer amiably stating: "GO RIGHT AND YOU HAVE ARRIVED".

She turns right down the road. It dips down as the asphalt quickly gives way to a dirt drive. Ahead of her, the fencing opens up into a dreamlike quaint meadow with a large, white canvas tent. Around the guy ropes and pegs, impossible amounts of white Christmas light strands of round bulbs are slung over the entrance then spreading out to the trees. It's as if someone took a child's dream fort and made it real life.

As she looks for a spot in the dirt lot she notices there is an odd assortment of vehicles. Some nice and fancy, some beaters like hers, a minivan, a pair of choppers with ape hangers, a cherry classic Beetle parked next to a new Bug that looks like it's been in a flood. "I guess the weirdos in the wild drive whatever they can get their hands on."

She finds a spot between a "work guy's white big truck thing" and a Prius. She grabs her phone and purse and starts making her way toward the opening of the tent.

There are a few people standing outside. A farmer drinking from a beer can with possibly the most generic label she's ever seen, a woman and her teenage son, who appears to be sick, and what might possibly be a frat boy from an 80's John Hughes movie, among a few others.

As she enters the tent the audience becomes even more oddly diverse. "It's like the parking lot was full of clique-specific clown cars that threw up their inhabitants in here." Everything from cowboys to b-boys, from shirts to skins, and beyond. The place was packed, but none of the cliques and casts seemed to be intermixing. "They don't seem to have problems, just each existing in their own personal bubbles."

As patchwork as the crowd is, there are similarities. Angelica noted two types of groups. The first are groups of friends. People who obviously know each other and seem to be having a good time. Laughing and behaving as one would expect friend groups to do at a concert. The second she assumes are families. Many of them consist of what appear to be caregivers and a beneficiary. Several seem to be older parents standing with a sick child and some appear to be grown children with an ailing parent. She notes the oddest thing about this second group. In each case, the caregiving side wears scowls or concern on their faces and the sick seem happy. Happy to the point where the bags under their eyes wash away from the twinkle within.

She looks up at the stage. Most of the shined wood flooring is behind a large red curtain with gold roping. Above the curtain hangs a huge banner that says "Ivan Rocket and the Blackness Between the Stars."

Beneath the banner, to the side of the curtain, she sees a neat, well-tailored man in a black suit wave to her.

"This must be Nicolas, Ivan Rocket's Press Manager." Angelica physically feels her eyebrow rise as she watches his approach. If one can glide masculine-ly? That is how she would describe it. He fluidly ebbs over to a folding table with red cups on it, grabs two of them and effortlessly flows over to her. As he approaches her impression switches from deified awe to nostalgic "ahhh" noticing his warm smile and outreached hands with what she assumes to be alcohol. "No wonder this guy's a great manager".

"Are you excited about the show Ms. Whateley?" Nicolas asks through his distinguished yet childlike grin.

Angelica views Nicolas to be charismatic, yet odd. His suit is black. All black. Black tie, black shirt, black jacket, and pants. He appears to be about 50 with a post-war-era-actor way of carrying on in a way the girls at the time would have found "terribly interesting". It's as if the Greatest Generation found the fountain of youth and stayed great forever. He was disturbingly perfect.

"Nicolas I assume?" Angelica asks, reaching out her hand to take the offered drink. Nicolas winks in acknowledgment. "I am excited," she answers. "But, I'm looking more forward to meeting and having a chance to interview… The band? Is it a band or a man? Will I be interviewing Mr. Rocket?"

Nicolas chuckles. "Ivan, Ms. Wateley. Just call him Ivan, and no need to be all business. This show is an experience!" he proudly says with a wave of his hand accentuating the tent and stage. "How can you write about an experience without experiencing it?"

"What's in this red cup Nicolas?" she asks flatly.

"Sierra Nevada I think," he responds, takes a sip, then nods with a smile of assurance.

Angelica takes a drink and wonders if Rohypnol tastes like anything?

"Weird setup you have going here. Weird crowd too," Angelica says.

He leans over and responds over the chatter, "How So?"

"Just appears to be people from all walks of life," she says.

"Oh yes. Ivan helps people with his music. All kinds of people," he says, answering her unasked question.

"What, like a faith healer? Cuz that's what this place looks like. Brother Love's Traveling Salvation Show or something like that," she says, proud of her music-writer Neil Diamond reference.

"I guess you could say that?" he says as Angelica realizes that her coolness has landed on deaf ears. "He is a healer," he continues over the chatter in the room. "But faith is irrelevant. Like most things in life, it just depends on what exactly it is that ails you. For those with the right sickness, Ivan has the right cure."

"OK then, if rock n' roll is the cure, what's the sickness? Or is it more like a rock n' roll deficiency?" she asks.

"The latter. Would you like another drink before we go meet him?" he says waving his arm and open hand out in guidance.

She chugs the cup and flatly says, "Yes please."

PART 002: Rock n' Roll is the Cure

~1~

Angelica follows Nicolas around the side of the large tent, past the wooden risers of the stage. He pulls aside a stretch of canvas letting her exit first. She notices the sun has already set as she steps through onto the grassy meadow. Among the innumerous strands of lights behind the tent, there are several cars, two vans, and one very dated RV.

She waits to allow Nicolas to take the lead. She follows as he leads a straight line toward the RV.

The RV is not hideous. It's just old. Well taken care of, clean, but mostly old. Angelica can hear rustic blues playing from the vehicle at a mellow level and pace. She recognizes it, an obscure song from country blues artist, Roarin' Willy Kilmaris. The whole field smells like a summer evening's wet grass mixed with the smell of popcorn and sugar.

Nicolas steps up on the first rung of the RV's folded

down steps. He knocks twice on the rounded milky glass and opens the door without waiting for a response. He steps inside and holds the spring slap door open for Angelica.

Angelica steps in admiring how well taken care of the, what she assumed to be original, long carpeting is. Orange shag is not a style choice you see often these days, especially one without any round black cigarette burns, burns she expected as the air was thick with several kinds of smoke.

Sitting at the fold-out table of the RV is Ivan Rocket. How does one look like a 20-something-year-old George Harrison, Curt Cobain, and Buddy Holly all at once?

Ivan has a blonde bedhead shag and military issue style reading glasses with a western cut suit bunched at the calf over metal-tipped scrunchy boots. Angelica can't figure out if he's before his time, after it, or plain out of it.

Nicolas introduces Angelica as Ivan finishes tapping the filter of a cigarette on the acrylic marbled tabletop. He pops the smoke in his mouth and half gets up to shake her hand. It was warm to the touch and not at all clammy as she expected it to be. He points to the smoke in his mouth and raises his eyebrows in polite uncertainty.

"No problem," she says sitting down and hearing the crack of springs and an alloy slap as Nicolas leaves the RV. From her pocket, she pulls her phone and holds it up showing an app with a big red RECORD button on it and give him the same uncertain look.

"Have at it," Ivan responds and then continues, "Angelica Whateley is it? And you write for?"

"The Arkham Music Review," she replies, making sure to repress any possible misassumption of pride or misery over her employer.

"That's a creative name. Well, it's nice to meet ya. Feel free to fire away." he says invitingly, lighting up his face with the lighter as he pulls a cherry on his smoke.

"Well, the thing I can't stop asking myself is 'What is Ivan Rocket's demographic?' So, I'll just ask you. There is quite the collection of Americana out there. What would you consider your demographic to be?" she asks.

With smoke rolling out of his mouth he responds, "All folks are welcome. I mean, what would Elvis's demographic have been at the time?"

"White people," Angelica says.

He chuckles and quickly corrects his question. "Okay, well what would it have been if the world wasn't filled with assholes?"

"People, I guess. So, your demographic is people?" she asks.

"I can't think of an artist that wouldn't want it that way. Sure we run in scenes, but we create art to be consumed. The more the merrier," he responds.

Angelica continues her line of questioning. "So is that what you are creating here? Art? Because your press manager seems to think you're a witch doctor or a faith healer."

He pulls another drag from his smoke and answers. "There are a lot of terrible diseases out there. Things you definitely need to go to the doctor for. I don't help people with cancer. I help people suffering from a blackness in their souls. The cure for that is some light and some happiness."

"Is that the blackness between the stars?" she asks.

"Yes, but let me stop you there. I don't pretend to know what the blackness is… or isn't. Blackness is the absence of light. Not sure if that's a something or a nothing. Sure we all know that something will kill ya, but eventually, having nothing will kill ya too."

"You have some profound views considering the lyrics to your song Rock n' Roll is the Cure." she requites.

"Hmm, yeah, I suppose I deserve that for the comment about your paper's name." He smiles while saying, "It's not really about the words. It's about the tones. 'I love you' can mean the beginning, the end, or assurance of continuance depending on the tone you present it in, but with the right tone on the right day, it can change your world permanently."

"Okay" Angelica redirects the conversation. "Let's land

this spaceship for a few minutes. What band would you consider to be your greatest influence?"

He looks at her with disappointment. "Listen darlin'. I'm a good judge of intention and you want to make a name for yourself." Angelica tries to hide her chagrin as he continues. "Probably best not to just ask me the standards. I'll happily answer them if you'd like. I have answered the standards all day and all week." He puts out his cigarette. "But, for some reason, I like you more than I like most and that's sayin' something cuz I like everybody." He pulls a joint from his cowboy-shirt breast pocket. "So, you have my ears and my voice at your disposal for the next 10 minutes. Ask me whatever you think will make you stand out from the other guys and gals writing." He lights the joints, exhales over his shoulder, and passes the joint to Angelica.

She takes the joint, looks at it, hits it, holds the hit, exhales, and says. "How did you discover your sound?" followed by a swallowed cough disguised as a clearing of the throat.

"There ya go." He says with a wink and a nod taking the joint back. Angelica is irritated at being patronized by a man even younger than her, but the look on her face asks him to continue. The joint is passed back and forth as he tells her what she will later decide is the most insane rockstar origin story she's ever heard.

"When I was a kid I was terrified of the dark. Visual hallucinations brought on by extreme fear-based anxiety or some shit." He doesn't make eye contact with her. Not out of insecurity but seemingly out of confidence. He's too busy pulling a story he knows but hasn't put to words in some time. "The only thing that helped was my mom singing to me. As she would sing, I would hum along. Eventually, I knew the song. Every night it would change melody, yet every night I knew it as though it was the same lullaby I'd heard for years. As she would sing and my hums would accompany her, I would see the shadows of my room stretch in the dark." He smiles to himself. "It was psychedelic man." He pauses to give the joint a few puffs ensuring it won't go out.

"Just like any kid who wet the bed until 12, I was a rebellious kid. I found drugs. I found music. I quit the drugs and kept the music. But no matter how messed up I'd get there was always the humming… All night every night. It brought me peace then, it brings it to me now. I found that every once in a while I would sleep at someone's house or shack up with some girl and the shadows would be thicker. Eventually, I understood that the extra dose of darkness that I felt was the shadow inside them. So I would hum the song, watching the bend of the shadow within them."

He finally looks her in the eye. "So now, sticks, strings, and keys hum instead. Play it from the right angles, at the right levels, it not only moves the shadows but can destroy the darkness entirely, igniting the blackness between the stars that have fallen to earth and rested in our souls."

Angelica stares at him doubly longer than one should. One length of time for the high and the other, her engrossment in the story.

"So which song is the one?" Angelica asks, not blinking.

"They all are. There is only one song," he says flatly extinguishing the joint in the massive and insanely full glass ashtray.

"But they all sound like different songs?" she asks.

He looks her directly in the eye and says, "I know. But they aren't."

Nicolas enters with a quick double knock. With a bygone twinkle in his eyes, through an excited whisper, he says, "It's showtime".

~2~

Angelica stands to the side of the tent, a new cup in hand listening to the ambient chatter in the tent. Nicolas stands at the side of the stage and claps twice loudly and the chatter stops. He steps down the side steps and disappears into the backstage shadows.

The lights dim and change from white to primary colors. The grand red and gold curtains slide open in the silence. All Angelica can hear is the creak of the curtain's rigging.

The back wall of the stage is covered with an expanse of machinery. Amplifiers, patch bays, cords and equalizers, each with at least one small light. It was like a wall of Christmas stars of cold blacklight-blues, angry reds, and greens between.

Ivan responds humbly to the fanfare. "Thank you for being here."

Many of the people in the crowd yell "thank yous" and other terms of adoration.

He turns to the band behind him."Y'all ready?" he asks. With a group nod, they go to their instruments. One man at the guitar, one woman at the drums, and the other two prepare to helm the wall of gear. Then all four of the supporting cast do the oddest thing. Each pulls a black piece of cloth from their pockets and blindfolds themselves. Already intrigued by the interview, Angelica leans in all the further to try to decipher this odd turn.

The guitar starts and quickly the audience's unison hand claps follow. Then Ivan starts to sing.

Angelica is surprised that the music is oddly tame with a 50s vibe. Simple lyrics, simple music. "I suppose the cure to the most complex, ununderstandable ailment in the world is three chords and a song about a girl?"

Front and center stood Ivan Rocket. Still in his cowboy suit, now holding a bass guitar. In front of him is your typical statement rockabilly mic, all boxed and chrome. Behind Ivan is his band. Four people standing in a row. Two men and two women, all of which somewhat androgynous and clean wearing matching black cowboy suits.

"Welcome one and all. We are Ivan Rocket and the Blackness Between the Stars." He says calmly into the eyesore of a microphone.

The crowd cheers.

She thinks. "Still, there is something oddly pleasant about it… Not sure if it was the joint, the possibly spiked drink from Nicolas, or the music, but I think I like it."

She takes another swig from the solo cup, swaying a bit with the tune while taking in the mess in front of her.

The musical tension and hidden discord start to climb signaling that the beat is about to drop. She sees Ivans hand familiarizing themselves with the frets. She sees the drummer go from staring through the darkness of her blindfold to focusing on the unseen drums before her. The two in front of the wall of lights are standing

still, each with a finger on a switch blindly looking up the monstrosity of equipment.

The beat drops in with one synchronized thunderous sustain that evolves into a rhythmic pulse as her ears adjust. The volume levels don't hurt. They are perfect. The low end almost feels like waves against her body.

The moment the beat dropped the crowd started to move.

Angelica remembers her purpose and fetches her phone from her purse and holds one hand above her head to video the welcome musical assault, the melodic cacophony that is Ivan Rocket and the Blackness Between the Stars.

Looking around the room the different groups of people have blended into one. Like a diverse drunken family reunion compelled to dance a professionally choreographed dance of St. Vitus. The only wet blankets of the festivity are the family members of the sick. They seem confused. Confused and concerned for their loved ones who only moments before looked to be at death's door, but now gyrate with the rest. The room reels and writhes and hops and bops with intoxicated glee.

That's not to say the dancing is great. It's not a show of technical skill or years of practice. It's unadulterated joy in motion. Each appearing to be dancing to their own beat. Different syncopations and different tempos. Every once and a while two would come together and make eye contact and their unique styles would blend into an interconnected, joyful gambol. Then, with seemingly blind acceptance, move apart and back to their own pace once again.

The bass and beat smash and release in step. Each hard hit causing the lights to dim. With each thump, the tent's most likely underpowered electrical system dims the lights even more. Dimming and rebounding until the pulsating of the lights and the music together become one fluid action. A slow strobe, in and out.

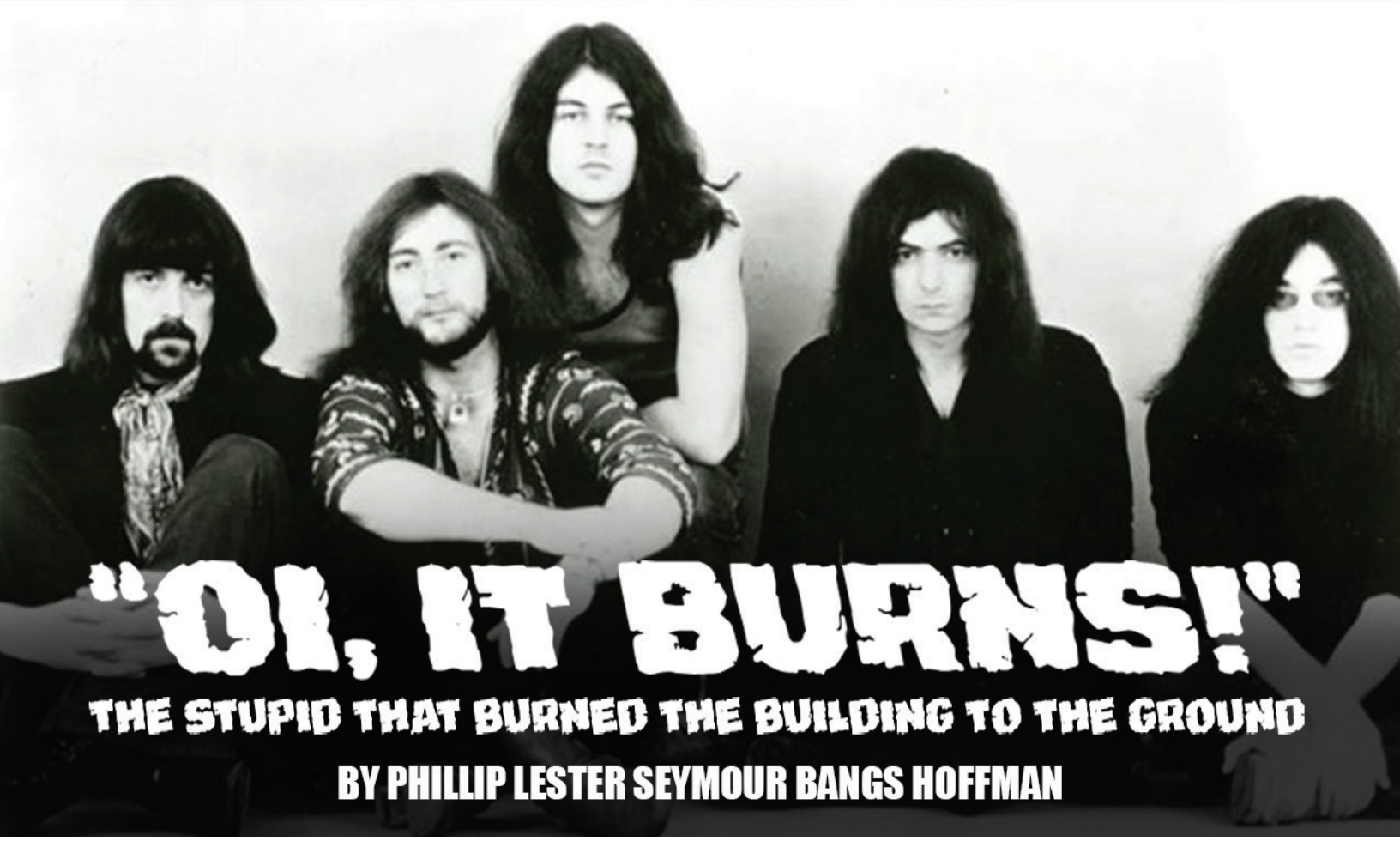
In the stroboscopic light, the dance moves become poses. Each flash of the lights, a snapshot of the festivities. Each return of the darkness a silhouetted negative of the previous moment.

Angelica is entranced. "Shit I can't handle this," she thinks. "My eyes are going crossed and I'm going to have the dance of all America burned onto my corneas forever." But still, she stares. The dances are rhythmic and consistent. The dances have not changed, but the shadows? The shadows are changing.

Each snapshot's shadow grows longer. Stretching across the floor like sunset. Peeling away behind each of them bringing the dancers forward, dropping the shadow ever further back. It is blissful vertigo, a reliable unsteadiness.

She feels as if her eyes have turned to a single fisheye lens. The broadening shadows bending at the edges of her vision, then swirling into a vignette.

Angelica blinks and rubs her eyes, then darts toward the door for some fresh air to ventilate whatever was in that joint, or that cup, or that music.



"OI, IT BURNS!"

THE STUPID THAT BURNED THE BUILDING TO THE GROUND

BY PHILLIP LESTER SEYMOUR BANGS HOFFMAN

British Rock band Deep Purple is known for hard driving drums, loud droning, melodic keyboards, heavy basslines, and loud, screeching guitars and vocals. But I bet you didn't know the true story behind their classic "Smoke on the Water", did you?

At this point, Deep Purple had one U.S. top 40 hit, a cover of Joe South's "Hush." They languished slightly, went through a lineup change replacing vocalists Rod Evans with Ian Gillian and Nick Semper with Roger Glover. They tried a musical change by combining hard rock with symphonic music, but it didn't click. They shifted to what they are more known for today, basically (along with Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin) as Godfathers of Heavy Metal.

After recording In Rock, Deep Purple was in financial dire straits. Overworked, with little to show for it.

And who came to their rescue?

You wouldn't believe it.

Jerry Lewis.

Yes. That Jerry Lewis. The comedian who made it big in the late '40s as a duo with Dean Martin and made a huge impact on the French (even to the point wanting to appoint Lewis as their President without holding elections) with a string of hit films such as the Nutty Professor. Lewis was feeling old and realized he'd lost that connection he once had with anyone under 12 and decided to embark on a tour as a psychedelic crooner.

But he needed a backing band.

"A groovy band, sweetheart," as he told one female journalist he convinced to sit on his lap, in 1970.

How that came to be was Lewis shared the same manager as Deep Purple, legendary confidence man, Chips De-oink.

This was just another less smart decision on the band's part for trusting manager De-oink.

Twenty minutes into the first concert in Swindon, U.K., Lewis had a tendency to delve into shtick, such as placing drumsticks up his nose and getting stuck, or getting into a fist fight with guitarist Richie Blackmore for telling the audience his surname was a reference to Blackmore's family being slaves in Barbados.

The band quit the tour that night.

Two days later, Lewis called. Saying, “I need youse help. A guy from Californ-i-a, called and said we go to Montreux. Two hundred thousand dollars, men. Come on, lil’ babies. Uncle Jerry needs your help for one more show.”

They agreed—but only if Lewis would not do his drumstick in the nose shtick or refer to Blackmore as the “Slave boy who can really play the Ukulele.”

They really shouldn’t have agreed.

One source claims, Lewis, once again, showed his ass to the band. Picking a fight with who he called “that pol-lock Frank Zapper guy who talks weird” Another source says, while at the casino trying to impress a Swiss girl too young to spell her name in the casino, Zappa walked in and proclaimed, “Some little Jewish guy leaked oil all the way from the entrance.” Pushing and shoving ensued. A fight broke out between both celebs’ entourage, while Zappa and Lewis crawled away to hide separately.

To get even, Lewis decided he would disrupt Zappa’s concert. He stole what he thought was a BB gun from the Casino security.

In actuality, it was a flare gun.

Lewis fired and the flare zoomed by Zappa’s face, catching a beam on fire. The flames rippled through the roof. Zappa coolly called out to the audience, saying, “I don’t want to alarm anyone, but… we’re all going to die! Fire!!!!!”

Panic. Tramplings. Screams.

Some members of the audience remember hearing a man scream, “Oi! It burns!” as he ran out of the building, climbing over people like a spider monkey from hell.

There you have it. The truth behind one of rock’s greatest anthems: “But some stupid with a flare gun, burned the place to the ground.”

Deep Purple made out all right from this disastrous concert. Frank Zappa got a really cool story to chastise interviewers with. And Mr. Lewis? Well, he still hosted the MDS Telethon for decades. But Zappa got his revenge by secretly financing Lewis’ career ending film “Hardly Working.”

THE CAMINO REAL

by Lothar J. Tuppan

She had been walking ceaselessly on the Camino Real, the day stretching past the road under her feet. The sky was a clear, bright, blue that promised to cover her for as long as she walked. Sounds came and went as she focused on different groups of scrub brush and rocks. She was tired but in a distracted sort of way. Her chest, right above her left breast ached. She stared at her Doc Martins as she walked down the cobblestones connecting the Spanish Missions of California. Rhythmically the cobblestones asked her who she was, and where she was going. She didn't know.

"Where does this road lead?" she asked, matching the rhythm. "What cities lie ahead?"

"None," answered the stones. "Only the Missions lie on this road."

She rubbed at the pain in her chest. It felt like there was something inside of her, something hard and hot. A small sob escaped her lips but she looked down at her feet, and kept walking.

When she next looked up, she saw a Mission in the closing distance. The sounds of the wilderness stopped as she stepped through the gate of the outer wall. The sun shone down upon the courtyard from an interminable mid-day point. The shadows were small and weak, barely daring to step beyond their roots. She turned to the left and entered the main building.

The door led to a hallway, which led to more doors, leading to rooms. Rooms filled with statues of saints and angels, madonnas and martyrs. The rooms spoke to her. In the room-of-the-bleeding-Madonna, she heard her mother, telling her not to upset her father who, having had a hard day at work, was in a surly mood. She heard her mother's panicked voice pray to Mary, and left the room, ashamed at the disgust she felt for the woman who gave her life.

In the room of the saint-with-the-axe-in-his-head she heard her father, asking her to forgive him while trying to convince her that it

was her fault anyway. She didn't like the way the saint looked at her. She hadn't put the axe to him, and a daughter should never feel foul when her father looks at her.

One room had a statue of Christ, looking to the sky in his crucified state, waiting for his father to deliver him. The room echoed noises of the past. Of people walking on the street around her, people ignoring the dirty runaway, alone, without a friend.

She visited all the rooms, and calmly, albeit uncomfortably, left all of them after hearing what they had to say. There was no love here, no god of any kind. This place was not her destination. Sitting down in the hallway, she sighed. She would have to keep walking the Camino Real, and she would be even more tired when she reached whatever lie ahead.

Walking back out into the courtyard she noticed an alcove against the far wall. Within the shade of the alcove she saw a man sitting. She walked over, shading her eyes so that she could better see, and said "Hello."

"Hello, young lady." said the man. He wore dark clothes, smudged by the dust, a brimmed hat (for working the California fields), and a smiling masque, reminiscent of the Greek comedy masques. The toes of his bare feet wiggled as a light breeze passed through the courtyard.

"Why are you here?" he asked.

"I don't know," she replied. "Why are you here?"

"Perhaps I was waiting for someone like you. Are you Catholic?"

"No. I don't believe any of that."

"Then why are you here?" He poked a stick into the mortar of the alcove and chuckled.

She felt the glimmering of a memory, of an old black man who wrote something unseen in wet cement with a stick. He had laughed too.

"Do you know my friend Elliot?" she asked.

"We've met before. Do you know God?"

"I... No. No I don't."

"What do you know? To what are you true?"

The hard thing in her chest burned. The pain made her double over and cry out softly, "Elliot." A tear landed in the dust and within the wet margins she remembered a gun, held by a sharp dressed man. She remembered the old black man beside her saying run, his voice filled with love. She remembered feeling that love and choosing to step between him and the sharp dressed man. She remembered the freedom and peace of her choice. She saw in her mind an even earlier time: Elliot writing in wet cement, "Karen is my friend." She remembered dying.

The man in the alcove touched her gently.

"Do you know who you are?"

"Yes. Yes I do." She touched the pain in her chest.

"And do you know God?"

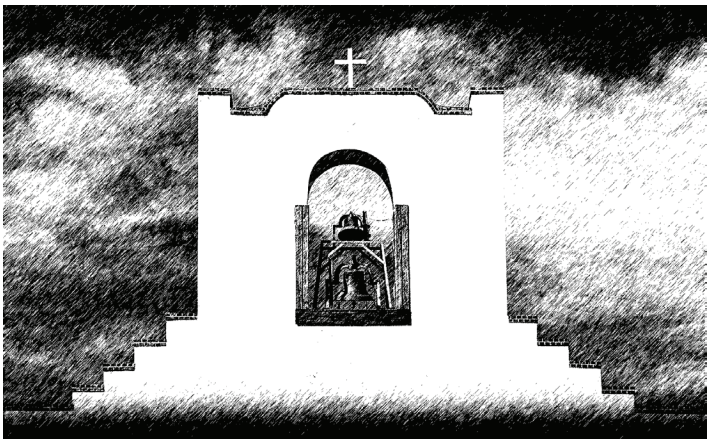
"Yes. If you want to call it that." And she pulled out the bullet, feeling the warm flow of blood over her hand and chest.

"And where do you belong?" He said, tears running down the cheeks of his masque.

Gently, she placed the bullet in his hand, and touched the lips of his masque, painting them red.

She turned away from him and left the Mission. Back on the Camino Real, she looked south (where her previous life ended) and north (towards further Missions). She knelt down to the stones of the road and touched them softly before walking west into the shadows of the wilderness, away from the Camino Real.

"My name is Karen."



PAN-DANA

10 STEPS TO CURE CORON-ER VIRUS

By Dr. Hillary Chestnut

One night, my husband Chestnut gulped down the last of his Budweiser and stopped watching a video of last year's Nascar race at Talladega and said:

"I reckon you know more about that coron-er virus than anybody I know."

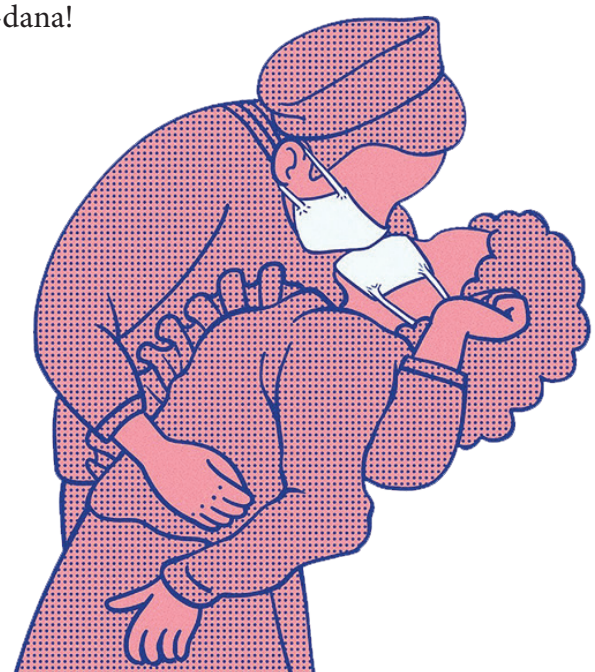
"You think so?"

"Well," he chewed a piece of bacon that had been stuck in his back teeth for two weeks and swallowed. "I know you know more about it than that Faoul-chee feller!"

I got to thinkin' about that one late night and I come to a-clusion that Chestnut was right. For instant, flu shit didn't come from no damn bat in china. No siree! It came from Spider monkees in south America. Yep. You can lookit up on Google and it'll tell ya fact-by-fact that I'm correct. Those little buggers peel the banana rinds and wear 'em around their necks wherever they go Poopin'. Sexin' their partners (which is usually their mommas, kinda like my cousin Brody and his trashy family) or just playin' golf with coconuts they find in gutters on the streets. Then those stinkin' spider monkees wrap the bananas back up and hang 'em back on the trees, usin' their spit to hold the rinds together.

Yep! It's all facts there. I Googled 'em on the dark web.

I've even come up with a better name for that virus. Pan-dana!



Here's a step by step guide on how to cure Coron-er.

Step 1: Get drunk real fast by drinkin' Dr. Pepper (a 12 pack), Nyquil, and Bourbon.

Step 2: Fill a light bulb full of grape Kool aid and rub it all over your body. (Hint: that was a huge turn on for my husband Chestnut. The grape Kool-Aid smell set him off!)

Step 3: Avoid any George Lopez shows. Obviously because he's from South America and cohorts with spider monkees.

Step 4: Don't take a crap in the bathrooms of Taco Bell. Obvious reasons.

Step 5: Shoot. I can't remember step 5. Oh, well.

Step 6: No banana daiquiris. They ain't real fruit, but I wouldn't take no chances.

Step 7: Eat fresh grass. Right after the lawn is mowed is the best time.

Step 8: Take Q-tips soaked in Clorox and swab yer own nose. Yep. Not only is it a home test and you ain't got to pay nobody, it also meets up with that killer Coron-er and eats away the germs! Tested and turns out to be true!

Step 9: Do what me and Chestnut do every Friday after he gets off work at the Ciggertte outlet. Drink a 12 pack and turn up Metallica's Ride the Lightning. Come Saturday afternoon when you wake up, you'll find you ain't got the Coron-er.

Step 10: Don't eat bananas a-tall!

There you have it. By the way, I ain't no real Doctor, they just call me that cause I cook the best Meth this side of Sunny Hills trailer park.

Bye for now!

THE FANTASTIC WORLDS OF LISSANNE LAKE

A GALLERY OF FROM ONE OF LEADING COVER ILLUSTRATORS IN PUBLISHING

Lissanne Lake has been a full time freelance illustrator for over thirty years. She earned her bachelor of arts in illustration at Jersey City State College, and then went to work in advertising in New York for a number of years before turning to illustration and fine arts. Since then, she has done art for over two hundred covers, including covers for best-selling authors such as Terry Pratchett, Thomas Disch, Raymond Buckland, and R.A. Lafferty. In addition, Lissanne has created numerous paintings for magazines book interiors and other products and publications.

In 2001, she published her own tarot deck jointly with Raymond Buckland, the Buckland Romani Tarot, for which she did all the art, and is working on another. Recently, she has painted 4 large murals for the cities of Jersey City and Hackensack She lives and works at her home in North Bergen, NJ, and has always been a NJ resident. To see more paintings, visit her Facebook page The Fantastic Art of Lissanne Lake.

VAMPIRES OF THE WEST COAST

By Kara Kittrick

Introduction: November 2019

It was the second full moon since the crisis began, and Portland waited anxiously to see if it would happen again.

The streets were deserted just before sundown - men and women dragged all their possessions indoors, causing no end of fighting where ownership was disputed. They locked and barricaded entrances, and stacked whatever they could in front of windows, for they did not want anything to look inside. Then they covered their ears and selected hiding places.

Hours passed. Seven thirty, eight thirty, nine-thirty, and silence reigned. A mother shut her eyes tight and squeezed her children close. One of the toddlers lost bladder control, crouched in the pantry all evening, but they all understood that they must not move.

Looters spotted it first. They were out on the streets, hoping to pick up some much-needed food and water while the rest of the fools were indoors with their superstitions. It looked like a dog encrusted with filth, eyes fused shut by caked-on gore, ribs hollow and draped in sagging skin. But it was as large as a bear, and when it opened its jaws, two glowing eyes, disturbingly human in appearance, stared out from deep in its throat.

It moved with haste that no man or animal could emulate, and screams of panic escaped to the ashy clouds. The entire city could hear their cries.

In the neighborhood of Goose Hollow, in an apartment where six families were sheltered, mute terror turned to active panic as the head of one woman, who a second ago had seemed just like them, burst free of the body, levitating about the room trailing organs and screeching like a banshee.

Across the river, in Laurelhurst, a survivalist peeked out from under the curtains to see what was happening. In the distance, framed against the moon, was a great bulbous spider, its thin legs ten stories tall. He dropped to the ground and whimpered. This was not the post-apocalypse he envisioned.

And, in a university housing block near the stadium freeway, John clutched Erin tight. Someone was banging on the door.

“Let me in!” that someone cried, their voice desperate, yet oddly flat and affected. “Please! You don’t know what’s out here!”

Erin wanted to help, but John whispered no. He didn’t think that the voice belonged to a person anymore. How did he know? Just a hunch. But it was clear the rules of the old world were to be scrapped, and caution, even superstitious caution, was now the order of the day.

Eventually, dawn came, and the sleepless city dwellers commenced their daily efforts to survive.

Act I: Monster in a Box

Chapter 1

“Have you ever spoken to a monster before?”

I shook my head. “Only the human kind.”

Sergeant Raja didn’t smile. “It’s not the same. Not the same at all,” he said. “For your first time, it’s best to

keep it short. Five minutes, maybe. Don't make eye contact. Don't get near the glass. She can't smell you, but if you upset the vampire it'll make our jobs harder."

I nodded. We stopped at a gate, and he punched in a code on a glowing keypad, beckoning me to follow. We were headed into the bowels of the old bunker now. The guards who were not armed with automatic rifles carried transparent feudal-looking melee weapons. "Ghost weapons," they were called. Exactly what made them special or how they worked was highly classified, but they were for killing monsters.

The fortification was dim and austere, with a smell like a recently cleaned morgue and wallpaper that peeled like sunburned skin. The creatures had to feel right at home. This place was spooky enough for any halloween monster.

"I do really appreciate this opportunity, you know," I told the sergeant. "I know it can't be too often that you let people in here for something like a dissertation."

He chuckled. "You suppose correctly. Medical dissertations, certainly. Mostly we do biological research here. You're the first political science grad we've had. But your husband had the idea and I could never say no to him."

I smile. "Oh it's not so hard, start crying and he's putty in your hands."

Sergeant Raja frowned.

"I'm joking," I said. I didn't think that method would work out for him anyway. Sergeant Raja had two emotions - forthrightness and righteous indignation.

At last, we arrived at a cell block on the lowest level, kept even darker than the others. The grimy orange industrial bulbs barely illuminated a path.

"Here we are. Specimens. For obvious reasons, we only use low-powered lights in this area." Raja stretched out a hand, indicating that I was to continue into the darkness alone.

"You're not coming with me?"

"I don't think you'd get much out of her if I accompanied you. But there's nothing to be afraid of. She can't hurt you. You told me you're not attracted to women?"

"That's right."

"Then you'll be just fine. If you feel the least bit uncomfortable, just call out, we'll stun her with the bright lights. I set up a chair for you in front of her window. The adjacent cells are shuttered, so the other monsters won't bother you."

Still, I was reluctant to proceed. In fact, in the end, the only reason why I did was I would have been embarrassed to have wasted everyone's time. This place - it was everything you screamed at characters in a horror movie to avoid. It was cold and dark and miserable. Torture happened here. It was literally full of monsters.

Yet I went.

Best to get this over with, I thought. You're going to have a dissertation about something real. They'll be quoting your work for years to come, I thought.

I walked faster and faster as I made my way down the hall until eventually I all but threw myself into the plastic folding chair they'd placed in front of the cell.

The window was dark too. Lights at the windowsill would allow me to see the creature within, provided she came close to the glass. I reassured myself that everything she did would be monitored by night vision cameras.

I scanned her file one last time, just to settle my nerves. Anna Tsybukin, 32 years old . . . born in Russia, grew up in Portland. Published a poem about being gay when she was 16. Became a corporate nurse for Nike after a stint in the ER. Married to Nadia Wilhelm, a criminal defense lawyer. Friends described her as smart, responsible, caring but nosy. A mom friend.

"Hello?" I said. "My name is Erin Forest. I'm a graduate student in sociology at the University of Portland. It's been arranged for us to speak together."

And then, as if emerging from the depths of the sea, an outline of a woman appeared, framed in the incandescent twilight. Lit from below, her bright red eyes twinkled like hellfire stars. Her crimson hair was long and ragged, hanging down to breast level. Her skin was colorless, her features gaunt and feral.

Could they have made this set up any spookier? I wondered.

She leaned her elbow against the glass, but said nothing - only eyed me hungrily. After a few seconds, I realized with a flush of horror and embarrassment, that I had been looking her right in the eyes for several seconds. It was hard to help - she was so inhuman it was mesmerizing. Furious with myself, I tore my gaze away.

"Anna?" I asked. "Can you hear me?"

"Of course."

"Ah, sorry! Yes. It's just you didn't say anything, so I thought-" Realizing that I was babbling, I caught myself. I'm sure I was blushing furiously - not always what you want to do when facing down a bloodsucker. "I have a couple of questions for you."

To my surprise, the creature smiled, revealing, yes, fangs. "You'll have to forgive me if I act a little strange. I don't socialize much. And they keep us starving, I'm afraid. So we don't break out. A few milliliters would be all it would take to restore my strength - they don't dare give even that."

Milliliters. Of blood. This person in front of me drank blood. I was having a conversation with something that had a human shape, yet was essentially a giant animal. A vampire bat on two legs.

I had no idea what to say to her, so I settled for, "I'm sorry."

"You're sorry?" She gave a strange, almost-joyful laugh. "You're not what I was expecting at all. It's adorable."

Now I was sure that I was turning red. "Adorable?" I spluttered. "Thank you, I guess? Listen, the reason I'm here-"

But Anna the vampire wasn't done with the topic. "You don't get compliments much, do you? Or when you do, you don't trust them, because they're from someone you know. A compliment from a stranger - even someone like me - I can tell you take that seriously. What a perverted view of things."

"Perverted?"

"Trust your friends. Hug them close, while you still have human arms." Like milk, her voice turned bitter in an instant.

"When you're trans like I am, you never know when friends are just trying to make you feel better."

When I first came to Portland, sometimes women would be suspicious of me because I still looked like a man - revealing my gender identity put them more at ease. Of course, things had changed a lot since those days.

Anna laughed softly. "I didn't even know. Your voice could definitely be a woman's voice. Your features are very feminine. You have nothing to worry about. You know, I attended a protest in Portland years ago - a national bill that would have removed certain protections for trans folk. I'm sure you remember."

"I do," I said. "I might have been at the same one." I might have passed her in the crowd. Of course, she would have been normal back then. No fangs, no appetite for blood. It was too surreal to contemplate. I had to steer the conversation back on track.

But the same thought appeared to occur to her, and she wasn't going to let it go. "You know," she said, with a nasty smile, "only people with a strong conscience can become vampires. I'll bet that If I bit you, maybe you'd become like me. Would that help you with your research?" She bared her fangs to punctuate the thought.

"If I call out, they'll turn on the lights!" I said, rather more frantically than I intended. Her threat had spooked me, I would admit it. For the briefest instant, I imagined myself standing on the other side of the glass and it was enough to make me shudder. "Look, I was just hoping we could have a civil conversation."

"Your wish is my command," she sniffed. "What did you want to know, anyway?"

"You've killed people."

"Obviously."

"But you didn't kill anyone for several years. They allowed me to read parts of your history. Your girlfriend, Nadia, fed you. In return, you protected her. Even fought off a demon that threatened the neighborhood."

"More's the pity."

"Why do you say that?"

"The reason we monsters are losing the war here in the west is because so many of us didn't even realize we were fighting."

"You mean, you tried to coexist."

"Is that what your research is about? The possibility of coexistence? I'm surprised they're even letting you write about that."

"It's about the existence of ethics among monsters," I told her. She'd hit a bit too close to the truth. I had, in fact, wanted to write about coexistence. My academic advisor and best friend, Emma, told me there was no way.

"What a stupid topic. You come here and rub my sins in my face? It's obvious why I kill. I'm a vampire, I do it because I'm hungry. Make no mistake, if the glass were gone, I'd kill you in a heartbeat. Not because I hate you. It would be involuntary."

"I'm not interested in why you killed. I'm interested in why you didn't."

She shrugged. "Because Nadia didn't want me to. I tried; I really tried. She tried too. Technically, a vampire can survive by peacefully drawing blood from a few donors. Practically speaking, it doesn't work."

I wanted to ask her to explain, to get more answers, but I could hear Sergeant Raja's footsteps. My time was up.

"Listen, I'd love to talk to you again. Before I do, I want to give you a copy of my introduction to the dissertation. If you don't mind doing so, I hope you'll read it and give me your opinion next time we meet."

"You know that I have to do whatever you say, right? I'm kept alive only because I'm useful for research. You don't have to be so polite." she said.

I nodded and produced the papers from my bag. It was titled Vampires of the West Coast: Monster Ethics and Society. There was a thin slot that could be used to push small items into the cell. I passed the fifteen pages of dissertation I'd written so far through it and into a collection tray below.

Anna smiled, and once again I accidentally met her eye, sending a vibration of warm terror through my being. In a surprisingly soft voice, she replied. "Don't worry, I'll read it. Better than the usual dissections. I look forward to your next visit."

Raja put his hand on my shoulder. It was time to go. It was only as we did I noticed that my hands were shaking like two epileptic starfish. No wonder he told me not to make eye contact.

Four years ago the world changed. This was how most newspaper articles began these days - except for articles in less serious and more casual journals which usually said instead "four years ago the world went to shit."

Both were accurate. And both were pertinent - no matter whether one was discussing international politics or gardening, it was always worth pointing out that all the rules were rewritten four years ago when climatologists discovered that damn temple.

A team of climate scientists from Oxford was doing a study of snowmelt due to climate change in Greenland. The team was so small that it didn't even make the news that they were doing this - just assessing the damage from the latest summer. They discovered that a major new crack had appeared in the Greenland ice sheet. What's more, they found there was something inside it.

This did make the news, although I didn't remember seeing it. My husband does. "Unknown structure discovered beneath Greenland ice Sheet." He swears he noticed it playing in the airport just as he was getting back from Afghanistan. In any case - it only took a couple of months before archaeologists found their way down to it.

The temple was like nothing they'd ever seen. It was apparently 150,000 years old - which raised a number of serious questions in itself. The contents were even more mysterious - presumably. The moment the doors of the temple opened, the entire research team died of causes unknown. All we have left is the notes they sent back to the States.

On that day, October ninth, two thousand and nineteen, an immense sound, a low rumbling, spread across the world. Every recording device on the planet - including NOAA's deep sea hydrophones - picked it up. It didn't cause damage but it was enormously unsettling. At the same time, approximately 3,000 individuals, all

across the globe, suddenly manifested their hidden monster genetics.

It was discovered later that these people were never "human" per se. They were the descendants of monsters who took human form to hide among the population. They were born to humans, grew up raised by humans, believed themselves to be so. But they weren't. And on that day, we all knew it.

China and India were swiftly overwhelmed by a strain of ghoulism. The newly awakened monsters had a taste for human flesh, and the ability to transform others into creatures like them. The two most populous countries on earth collapsed within a year.

No one is exactly sure how nuclear weapons got involved but they did. Even now, news of the wide world only slowly trickles in, but it seems that with one thing and another the number of major cities in the world was reduced from roughly four thousand to maybe thirty.

I was twenty-two when this all started and a student at Portland State University. Fearful of the work world, and thoroughly enamored of my subject, I choose to stay in Academia and go for a doctorate in political science. Maybe I'd run for office one day. I didn't know.

For about two weeks classes were canceled. Strange news stories were coming in: A small town in New Mexico is emptied of people. Figures in red robes flood the streets of Boston. The Senate passes a bill banning the possession of silver objects with no explanation. The only thing the stories had in common was that none of them made any sense at all.

And then everything just stopped. The internet, the power, the phone lines, they all went out. Deliveries stopped. The radios were full of static and the air was full of smoke. The city and the police attempted to keep order, but more and more they had to supplement with militias. John and a few buddies managed to keep our neighborhood safe - special forces training and all. But it was a challenge.

I'd stockpiled several years worth of hormones (and antiandrogens, though I'd gotten surgery at twenty and didn't need them anymore). A couple of times we only survived because I managed to trade them to other Portland trans folk for food.

But there was never enough of anything - we were always cold and hungry, and almost every day John had to kill people who'd come to loot and steal in our neighborhood. A few here and there at first. One week raiders essentially laid siege to the university - we were out of bullets. John was the only fighting man left. He grabbed a knife and a wood ax and snuck out the window during the night.

When he came back, his clothes were shiny-wet with death. Thirty people, in close combat - something he'd never been seriously trained for. "Babe, I'm tired," he told me.

And through all of it, there were the whispers. The rumors. "Why does no one come to help?" People asked. "The rest of the world has been overrun by creatures," others answered.

Every full moon, we all hid inside, fearful because something was out there. People grew sick with radiation and died, so it was clear there was fallout in the winds. People would vanish all the time. If you left campus you were taking your life into your hands. Your soul too.

Things didn't start to get better until the second spring. That was when the army arrived - or what was left of it. It wasn't just US troops either - it was a sort of patchwork of warriors from all over the world who had tried and failed to hold their cities - consolidated for a last stand in the Pacific Northwest where the monsters were less organized.

And it worked - they kept the order. They put people to work again (John as a soldier obviously. I wound up teaching). The University became a staging ground for research on the specimens they brought with them. Soon there was food and medicine in the stores again. Life started to feel real again.

By now, we'd taken almost the entire west coast. The monsters were driven back. San Francisco may have been the capital of our new country - that was political compromise for you - But Portland was the bastion. It was where knowledge and culture had been preserved. Through unbelievable good fortune, I lived and still had a future.

The bunker was built into one of the many green hills that overlooked the Portland suburbs. It had been built

by someone extraordinarily wealthy, right underneath his house. Not only was it designed to keep his family alive, but it had been built as a sort of post-apocalyptic zoo. The cages which now held vampires and were-wolves once held lions and bears. Of course, now the owner was gone, as were his animals. The house was a ruin, as was the surrounding neighborhood. During the first years of the crisis the city outskirts had been largely been abandoned as indefensible. Even now this was still the case, except for military outposts here and there.

I walked my bike through the forest, then got onto the freeway back to the center of town. Most of the lanes were now reserved for bike and pedestrian traffic since only military and industry groups had vehicles. These outskirts were eerie, and the bike ride back always made me nervous. What had once been a town called Clackamas was now a tangled rainforest, the rooftops converted into quiet watchtowers.

It was daytime and this was one of the safest parts of the country, but biking alone along the highway I felt like monster food. Maybe Anna had spooked me more than I thought.

I only started to relax once I reached the city and was surrounded by people again. Downtown Portland was much like it was. Oh there wasn't nearly as much vehicle traffic. And there were no large corporate buildings - the storefronts had generally all been raided by gangs back in the early days. But in the last few years local businesses had started to sprout up again. In a way, it was nicer than it once was. More authentic.

Of course, there were also signs of our fear. Floodlights were mounted on every building. Jury-rigged phone booths were installed on every street. They had large red buttons you could press that would activate loud sirens and wake the whole neighborhood in the event of monster attack.

John and I lived in University housing - after everything we'd done to keep the campus safe, people accepted that our small apartment belonged to us - no need for rent or landlords. Things could certainly be a lot worse I told myself as I reached the edge of campus. There's hardly any smoke today. You can see the sun, though it's hazy. A group of healthy-looking teenagers passed me, laughing and chatting and enjoying the air.

Then again, I had to remind myself that as the wife of an extermination operator, I enjoyed a lot of unusual privileges. The PCA made sure to keep its soldiers and police happy, but the average worker, skilled and unskilled, spent seventy hours a week at tough labor just for a stipend that barely covered backbreaking rents imposed by the landlords who cooperated with the military. The same landlords that, generally speaking, had controlled raider gangs in Portland until the army arrived.

Not to mention the plight of refugees. Even if you were a skilled and helpful person, it was never good to be another mouth to feed.

So the PCA wasn't great for everyone. But compared to the earlier years? Life was good. Life was safe. I had a man I loved, who loved me back, and we were both spending our time doing what we enjoyed. The memory of the wraith-like vampire in that dark bunker? It barely seemed real.

I locked up my bike and nodded to the patrolwoman on duty outside the apartment. She had a shotgun in one arm, and a cat in the other, although she wasn't playing with it. It looked for all the world as though the cat had simply been issued to her - like her weapon and uniform.

"It's for detecting ghosts," she explained, as the cat tried to climb onto her face.

Our apartment was upstairs. John would just be waking up - after two months on expedition he could hardly be blamed for sleeping in. For three glorious weeks, I would have the man to myself.

He was sitting at a table eating "Mountain Cottage artisan steel-cut oatmeal" (read: freeze-dried mush in a bag) when I walked in.

"Hi honey, how were the vampires?" He asked. This was my line - it was what I asked him every time he returned from expedition.

"Dead," I replied with a smile. This was his line.

Before I knew it, I was in his arms. All thoughts of Anna - her fangs, her eyes, her skin - forgotten. It was John time. Six feet tall with buzzed blonde hair. And he'd never lost his special forces muscle. Every time I

saw his face I was reminded of a German Shepard - alert, eager, faithful, and a little bit dopey if I was being completely honest.

John was the first person ever to make me feel like a woman. We'd met when I was eighteen. I was still shaking off the cobwebs of transition and was only just starting to pass as female. And it was terrifying. I was working as a waitress in a kind of seedy bar back then and didn't have the faintest clue how to deal with male attention.

So I took a self-defense class. That John happened to be teaching as a volunteer. One day, I happened to ask him how to make men back off.

He'd shrugged. "Tell them you have a boyfriend. It sucks that that works but it does."

I must have appeared skeptical, because he added, "And if that doesn't work, try this," and he showed me how to "accidentally" break someone's foot with a well placed stomp.

Two weeks later I pretended to trip and used his little trick to dispatch one of our problem customers. I got yelled at, but I didn't get fired. The next time I saw him, he asked if he could buy me a drink to celebrate my victory, then jumped back in anticipation of a foot attack.

I took him up on it. Later I mentioned I'd seen "the Raid' recently and he taught me some of the moves from the movie. Then the Raid 2 happened to be in a local theater so of course we had to go together. Eventually we'd had four dates before we even realized we were dating.

After we'd been seeing each other for six months, some superior of his decided that he was too valuable to waste on a desk job in the states. We decided to wait for one another. For years, we only saw each other at Christmas. Then as soon as he was done for good the world decided to end. Now I only saw him for a month at a time, and I spent the rest of my life worrying that he'd be killed.

Worth it. It was all worth it because of him.

"So, thank you for arranging this whole visit," I told him. "I'm going to have one hell of a dissertation."

"I still don't totally understand why you wanted to speak with a monster," he admitted. "But that's okay. Any earth-shattering insights?"

I thought for a moment. "Vamps scary."

"Anything else?"

"John pretty." I kissed him. He was very warm. Another thing I loved about him - he was like a space heater.

"Correct!" he said. "A plus."

And he carried me into the bedroom.

An hour later, we were both exhausted. The sun, outside our window, was hanging low - the color of a pink highlighter in the smoke. "Ugh," I said, throwing an arm over my eyes. "I have to teach."

"I swear, your schedule is so goddamn weird," John said.

"Okay, soldier boy. It's not that complicated. I teach sections on Mondays and Wednesdays. I teach my other sections on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The rest of the time I have classes. Saturdays and Sundays I teach pre-school."

He gave a contented, cat-like sigh. "I'm just happy one of us doesn't kill things for a living."

"You know I've never minded what you do. I didn't mind it when it was people. I especially don't mind it now that it's monsters. Far as I'm concerned, you're a hero."

"High praise from someone who once woke me up because you had 'a scary nightmare about the military-industrial complex,'" he smirked.

A moment of silence.

"You know the vampire - the one you picked out for me to talk to?"

"Anna, I think.

"Did you know that she went years feeding off her girlfriend without biting anyone?"

"Of course. That's why I wanted you to talk to her. She was probably a decent person before."

"I didn't know that was even possible."

"Yeah, it's not commonly known. A vampire bite is fatal - or worse. But if they draw blood in other ways, they don't need to kill to stay alive. Sometimes they try to stay under the radar by mind controlling someone and leeching off of them. It makes our job really hard to track them when they don't drop bodies."

"True, but it sounds like Anna's girlfriend was doing it of her own free will."

He stood up, started putting his clothes on. "Maybe, yeah. Can't imagine what was going on in her head."

"Couldn't there be harmless vampires, then? I mean, wouldn't that be sort of the ultimate protection against monsters - having a monster on your side?"

"Erin, vampires need at least a pint a day to stay healthy and happy. No single donor can provide that without serious risks. Anna probably only lasted by killing raiders and stuff."

"But if we could develop a pool of donors-"

"If we compelled people to give their blood we'd be no better than the vampires. We can barely keep our blood banks stocked, as is."

"You sound like Anna."

He gave me a pained look. "What did she say to you exactly?"

"She said coexistence was possible. But that it would never happen."

John nodded sadly. "She's right."

I sat up. "Well, doesn't that make you sad? I mean, god, it doesn't have to be like this! I think you both are giving up too easily."

"What I do isn't exactly easy, Erin."

"I'm sorry, that was a stupid thing to say, it's just-"

"Do you have any idea how scary monsters actually are? No, you don't - because it's classified, but I think maybe you need to." As if ticking off a list in his head, John launched into a speech.

"Werewolves?" he started. "Well, actually they can shapeshift into whatever they want, all they need is to put on a fur and they're a super-fast bulletproof animal. Oh, and if you lock eyes with their human form, suddenly it's you they're wearing like a skin."

"Witches? They look just like you or me, but if they get their hands on a strand of your hair, they can kill you from a distance, any time they want. And that's just the weaker witches."

"Oh, and ghouls," he continued, "they look just like people too, at least until they get hungry for flesh and start rotting. They can pop off any limb they want and control them from a distance and oh, by they way, they can't die. All you can do is seal them in concrete and hope for the best."

"John," I interjected. But he wasn't having it.

"And can't forget ghosts. They can't hurt you physically, but once they start following you around it's only a matter of time until you go completely crazy. And demons are even worse-"

"John!" I said. "You're right. I get it!"

He sat down on the bed again. "Look, I'm sorry. You care more than anyone else I know. About everything. And you've never met a minority you didn't want to save. But we're on the knife's edge here. You know as well as anyone else that things didn't start getting better until we went on the offensive - hunting down monsters instead of just keeping an eye out in the neighborhood. It's awful, but welcome to the post-apocalypse. "

"I can't accept that."

He hugged me. "That's why I love you. But you have to. Besides, I know what this is really about."

I gave him a quizzical look.

"Trans people are going to keep getting their medicine. The estradiol at least would need to be manufactured anyway. The people making noise right now are just a vocal minority-"

"What, you think I identify with vampires because I

feel guilty about needing medicine?"

"Don't you?"

If there was one thing that annoyed me about John it was that he thought he was very perceptive. He wasn't. Perhaps I felt more empathy for other outcasts because of my trans status, but it only took two seconds of critical thought to determine that vampires and trans people were not the same.

"There's a world of difference! I'm a human being, for one thing. I can't believe you even thought that! I want to stop the killing cause it's wrong. And by the way, the vocal minority you're talking about includes President Ochre and like half of Congress so-"

"I'll protect you, Erin. From monsters, from people, whatever. No matter what. Everything I do. Everything the other soldiers do, it's to protect you. Please, please, please try to remember that when you write your thesis. And be careful, because I think vampires are the worst monsters of them all."

John was a hard man to upset, but I could tell he was a little more wounded than he let on. I understood what he was saying, and even accepted that he was probably right. But it didn't feel correct. Me and my big mouth. Always being an activist, even when the world was ending. Even for stupid causes.

"I promise," I said.

An uneasy smile crossed his face. "If it's alright, can we not talk about this again?" he asked, somewhat sheepishly. "I just can't go out there and fight at my best if I've got thoughts like this rattling around in my head. I know it's important to you, but I have to be left out of it, okay?"

"Of course it's okay. I shouldn't have brought it up." I kissed him again, then spotted my underwear lying in a heap on the floor and sighed. "I have to get ready for section."

"Sounds rough."

"They make you wear clothes," I pouted.

"What? No one makes my girl do anything," he cried. "Fuck the police!"

"Stop teasing."

He held up his hands in a gesture of submission, but as I got into the shower, he added, "This is what democracy looks like!"

My man, ladies and gentlemen.

Vignette September 2007

If Anna was honest with herself, she kind of regretted sneaking out, and she definitely regretting buying the fake ID. Two hundred dollars, to her least favorite classmate's cousin, just so she could sit in a gay bar, by herself, too nervous to talk to anyone.

She'd known she liked girls ever since she was nine years old, living in the foothills above the tiny Russian town of Fatezh, watching bootlegged copies of Kim Possible from the United States.

To their credit, the elder Tsybukins (her aunt and uncle, her grandparents, her cousins), had all known as well, and even in rural Kursk Oblast, that deeply homophobic wilderness, they'd loved her and made arrangements for her to travel to the states so she could be with her father. "You cannot be yourself in Russia," they told her. "People like you are the future. And that future is in the United States."

But that only led her here. She was the strange Russian girl in a strange city, and though men hit on her she had no friends. Her neighbors in the high-rise apartment were so loud at night and there were so many people at her high school that veritable rivers of students filled the halls with the ringing of every bell. All she wanted to do was flee back to the mountains.

And now? The gay bar was so loud and it was filled with twenty and thirty year olds, and their gaze made her most uncomfortable. She'd told three people that she just wanted to drink alone. Anna huddled in the corner, listening to her heart pounding in her chest.

"There's no way you're 18," a voice said, causing Anna to start. A doe-eyed girl with brown skin and a very long ponytail had taken a seat at Anna's booth. Her nose was large and curved downward at the tip, giving her not just a beautiful appearance, but a striking one.

"Relax!" the girl chuckled. "I'm 16," she stage-whis-

pered. "You go to my school don't you?"

Anna wasn't sure.

"Yes, you do," the girl said. "I've seen you around. I suspected you were gay."

"Why?"

"You dress like a lumberjack, you sit like a boy, and you spend your lunch periods whittling with that knife you sneak in."

"That doesn't mean I'm gay," Anna pointed out.

"No, but you told Mrs. Melvin that you thought Viola from Twelfth Night was gay."

"People made fun of me for that."

"They shouldn't have! She's obviously way into Olivia."

Anna choked on her vodka.

"What is that, Vodka?" the girl crowed, noticing her drink at last. "The Russian girl is drinking Vodka? You are such a stereotype."

"It's not even good," Anna admitted. "They had much better stuff back home."

"Better? It's fermented potatoes and water."

Anna grinned, "Spoken like an American."

The mysterious interloper stood up. "Come on girl, let's get you a beer."

Anna stood up too. "I'm Anna by the way," she said.

"I know," the girl said. "I'm Nadia."

And then they stayed out until 2 in the morning, hopping from bar to bar, kissing in the corners to the wolf-whistles of strange men. And when they were done, they sat on Anna's doorstep and talked until the sun came up.

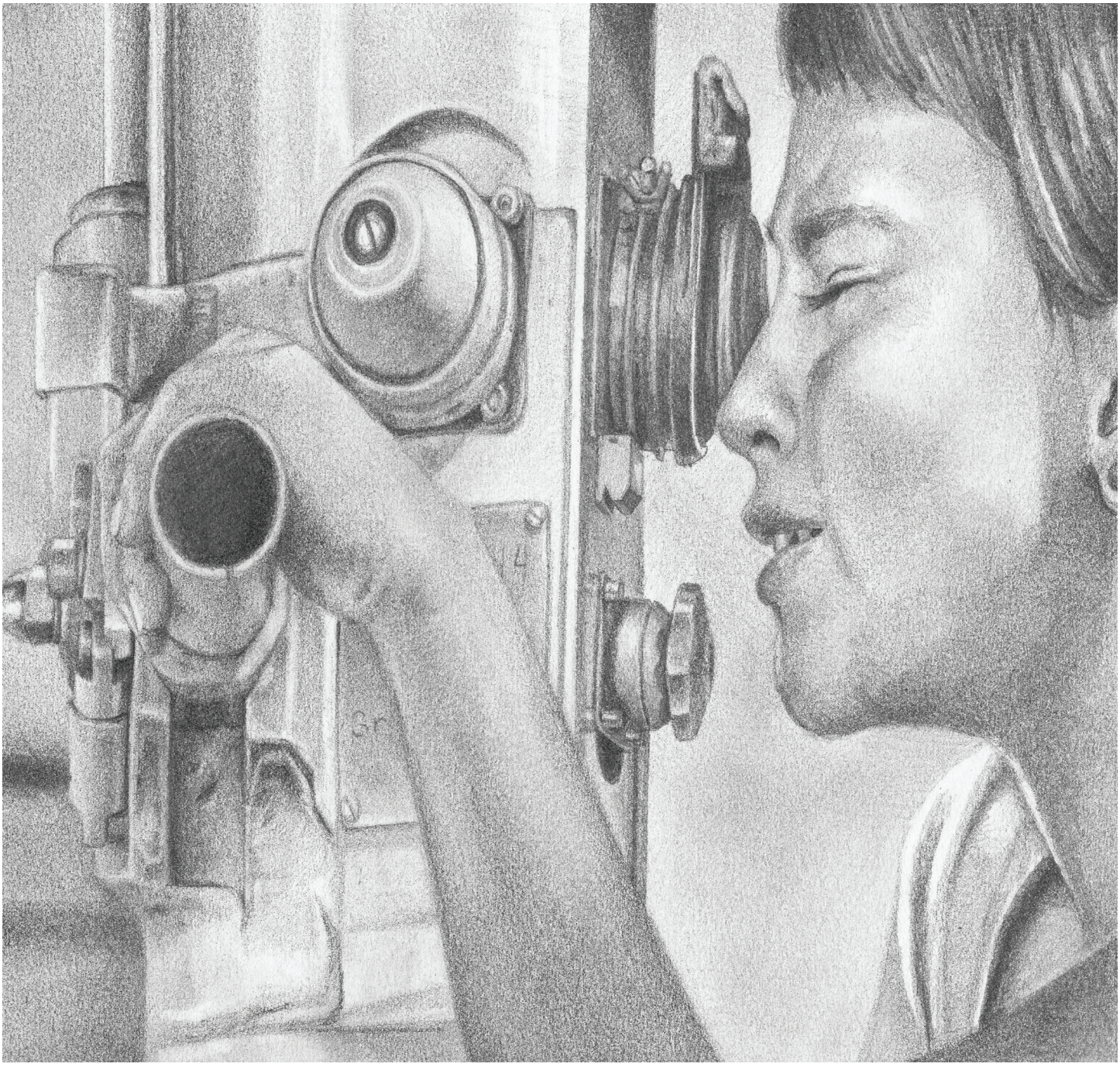
Her dad grounded her for two weeks, and yelled at her to "wipe that dazed expression off her face."

Anna barely noticed.

RAT AND MIRIAM

STORY BY MARK SLADE ART BY AMANDA TURCO

(Dedicated to David Drake)

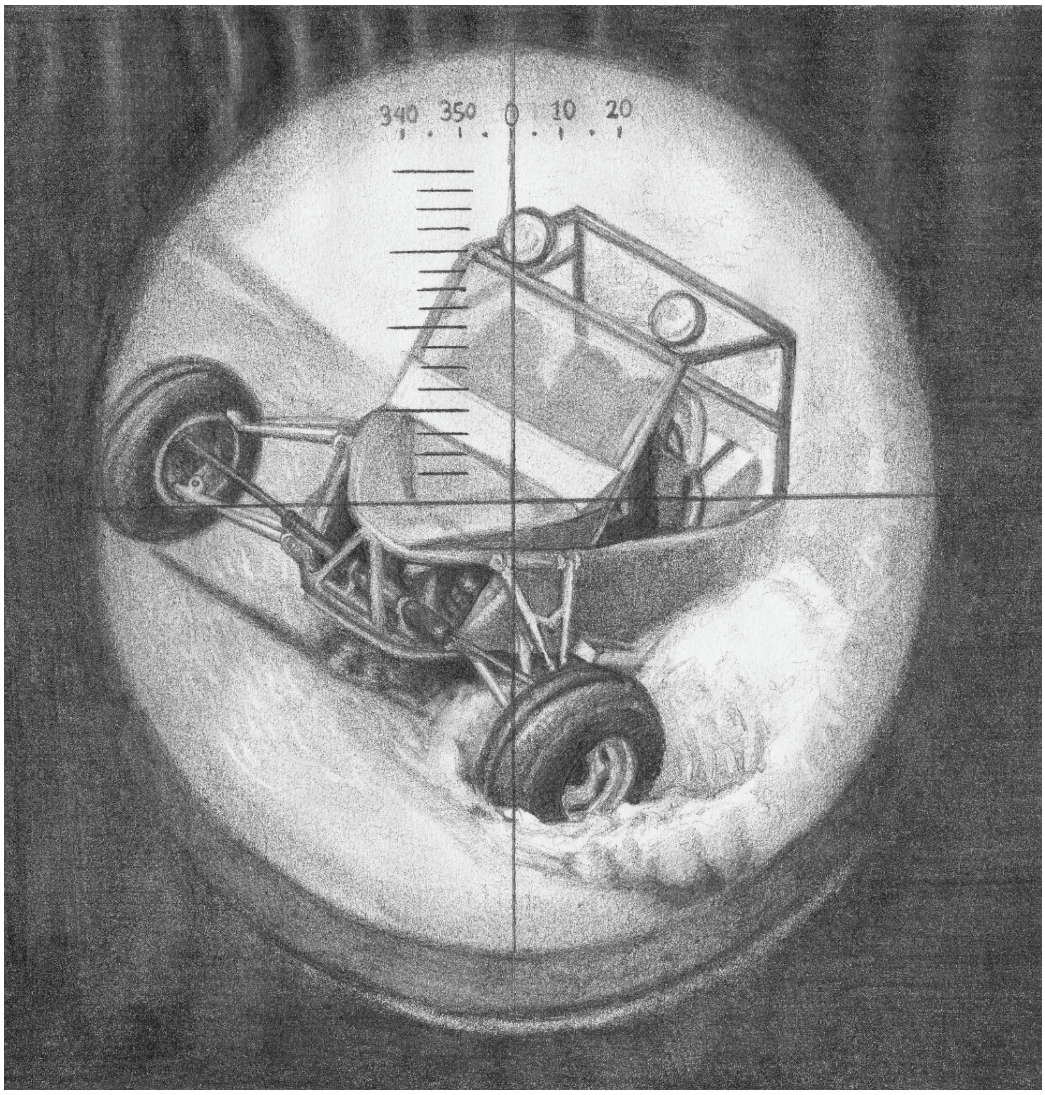


"I see those dog-faced assholes now," Miriam screamed as he looked through the periscope and shifted into fifth gear. The tank kicked up a cloud of dust, burying the skeletal dune buggy baring down on it quickly. The desert sun was high in the sky burning, a hole in old Earth's atmosphere. We were being chased by The State's Imperial police and they were looking to throw Miriam and me in the underground slammer for selling black market oxygen.

Hey, wherever there's a buck to be made, Miriam and me will sell the nipples off a dead bitch's tits.

"Hey Rat," Miriam called out to me. "Those dickweeds are closing in on us!"

"Go into sixth gear and hit the hyperspeed button," I said. I spun around in my chair, flicked on the necessary switches on the tanks motherboard. The tank wheezed and jittered. The wheels rolled over branches, bushes, a hillside, finally crushing a small house by the sea. We were ready to jump head first in the polluted waters off the coast of Maine when the tank sputtered, choked, died on the shore of rolling waves.



"Fuck!" Miriam cried out. "If they catch us with that oxygen it's over with!" He bawled. Being a mutated hermaphrodite must be hell with those wild mood swings. I'm a woman and my mood swings stay in check at all times. Well, mostly.

"Shut your fucking gob, Miriam!" I screamed at him. He lowered his head, sobbing quietly. "The damned override crossed the lines on the motherboard again. Remind me to give Gav a swift kick in the nuts when I see him." Gav was our mechanic. I pay him in ten percent of the cut from the oxygen I sell to the dead on the streets who still think they are alive. The oxygen goes to their brains and they can function like the rest of us with minimal cannibalism of the living. Minimum I mean opening their own butcher chops to sell to the living. Oh the government does not want zombies to become the norm of everyday existence. They wouldn't have a war to wage, thus the world would pay attention to other things fucked up. Such as the water supply being taxed or no regular citizens are allowed to have any transportation unless they are a part of the government beat down.

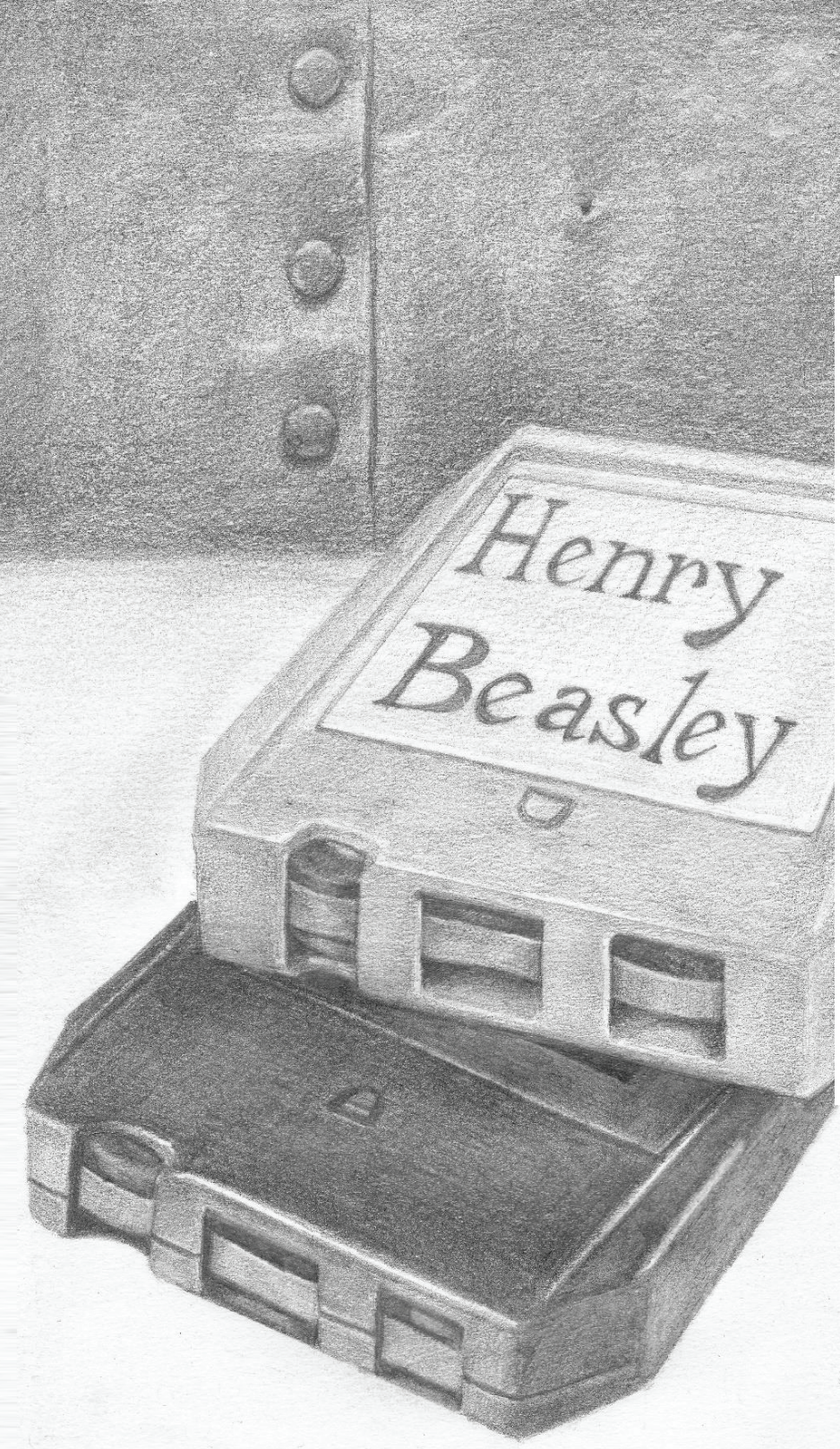
"Get out of your unauthorized vehicle, citizen!" We heard the voice of the police officer. "We will count to three before we commence artillery fallout."

I looked at Miriam. He wiped his eyes and reached for the laser dispenser Gav converted from an AK-47. I shook my head.

"Let's go out there without those." I said.

"Are you sure, Rat?" He asked, ready to break into tears at any time.

I thought about it, then nodded. "Yeah." I said. "Something tells me the Glorious Ninth can't take any more hits right now."



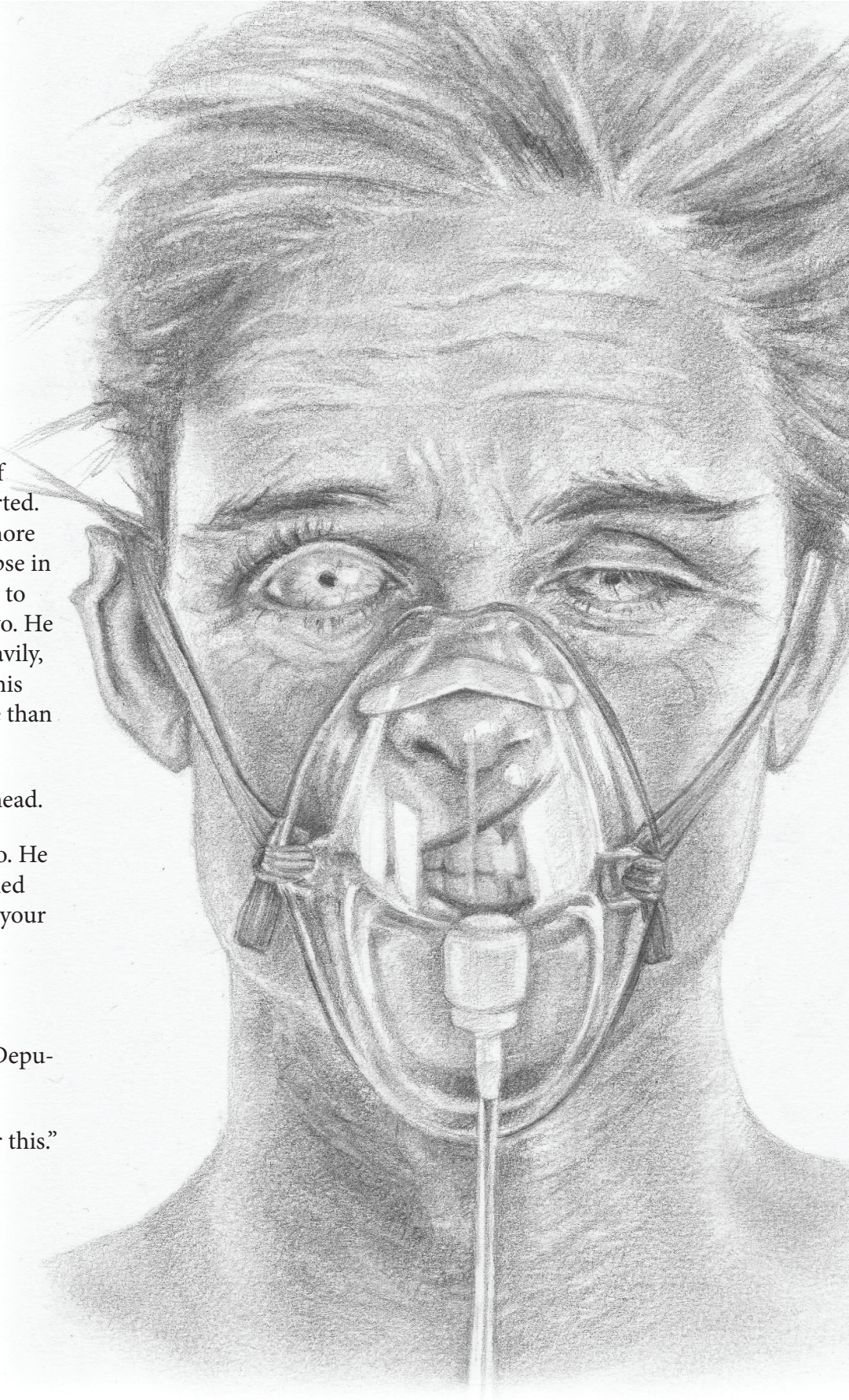
"AHHHHHHHHHHHH! Stupid tank! Fuck you Gav!" Miriam punched the dashboard. Several 8-track tapes of digital speeches by the former president of the world fell to the tank's floor. It's only fitting that a fallen leader who opposed military politics would fall. Ten years ago Henry Beasley was gunned down and the military released a virus that killed off most of the population in hopes to rebuild the world with better citizens. Instead they created a zombie apocalypse that 21st century movies used to make and crammed down our throats. I motioned for Miriam to open the tank's lid first. He cursed me under his breath. The lid slid open and Miriam poked his head out. He saw two deputies pointing flash guns at the tank. They all look the same. Those deputies have long spiky pink hair, no shirt under their overalls. Large boils cover their bodies and they have to wear sunglasses because the sun's rays could burn holes in their retinas. I swear the chief of police were cloning these fuckers.

"Get out now!" Deputy 1 screamed.

"Or we'll blast you to kingdom come!" Deputy 2 screamed.

"That's original," I said. "You two are a couple of cards."

I pushed Miriam out of the way so I could pull myself out of the tank. We both lined up against the tank, our backs to them so they can frisk us. I felt hands roll across my breasts and cup my nipples. If I could find clothing less revealing I could wear in the tank other than a tank top and cargo fatigues, I would.



"Hey! Watch it buddy!" I told one of them. Deputy One giggled and snorted. He probably hadn't had any since shore leave, unless he found a willing corpse in a ditch somewhere. Miriam seemed to enjoy the frisk as well as Deputy Two. He hovered over Miriam, breathing heavily, smiling ear to ear. Miriam wiggled his fat ass to encourage him to do more than touch.

That's when an idea popped in my head.

"You like her?" I said to Deputy Two. He grinned and nodded. "Yeah?" I smiled back. "If you let us go, she will fuck your brains out. How's that, stud?"

The Deputies exchanged glances.

Deputy Two nodded immediately. Deputy One had his doubts.

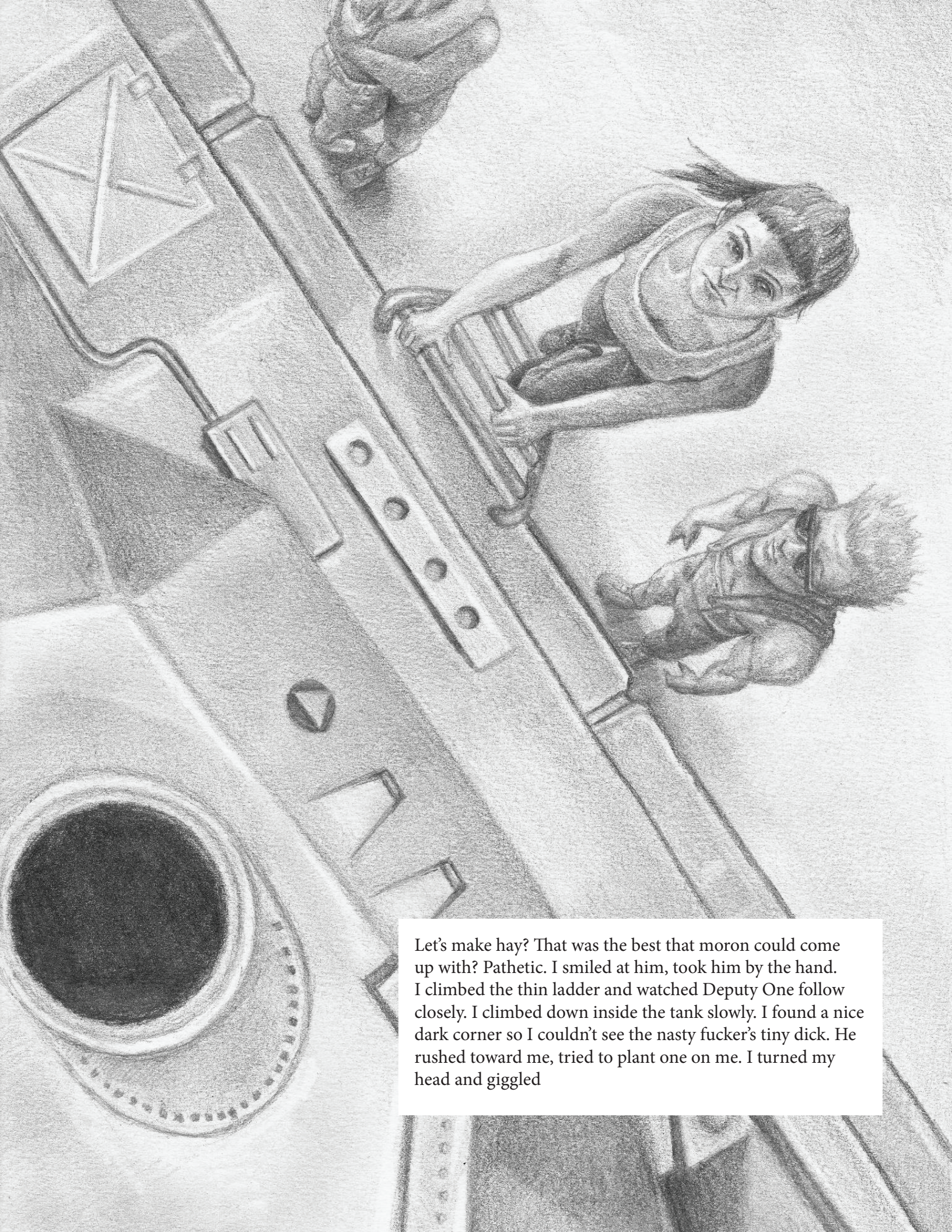
"The Chief would have our asses for this."

He stated. "Zeppo there would be content with a piece of hairy ass and his walking papers. He can always work on his Uncle's pig-shit farm. Me," He jabbed his thumb into his own chest. "I got a family, see. I got four little snot-nosed grubbers, a bartender, and two fucking wives that rely on me. What do I get out of this?"

I sighed heavily and rolled my eyes. I looked over at Miriam and he and Deputy Two were already tonguing each other touching places no one needed to witness. I made up my mind to fake a smile and flutter my eyelashes. "You know," I made my voice a little more husky and whispery. "I have always wanted to fuck in the Glorious Ninth," I pointed to the tank.

Deputy One's chest heaved. He shook a bit and stepped closer to me. He laughed, showed me the one good tooth in his jar shaped head. Whatever he'd eaten before did not kill that horrible stench that rose from his rotten gums.

"Let's make hay, baby," Deputy One said.



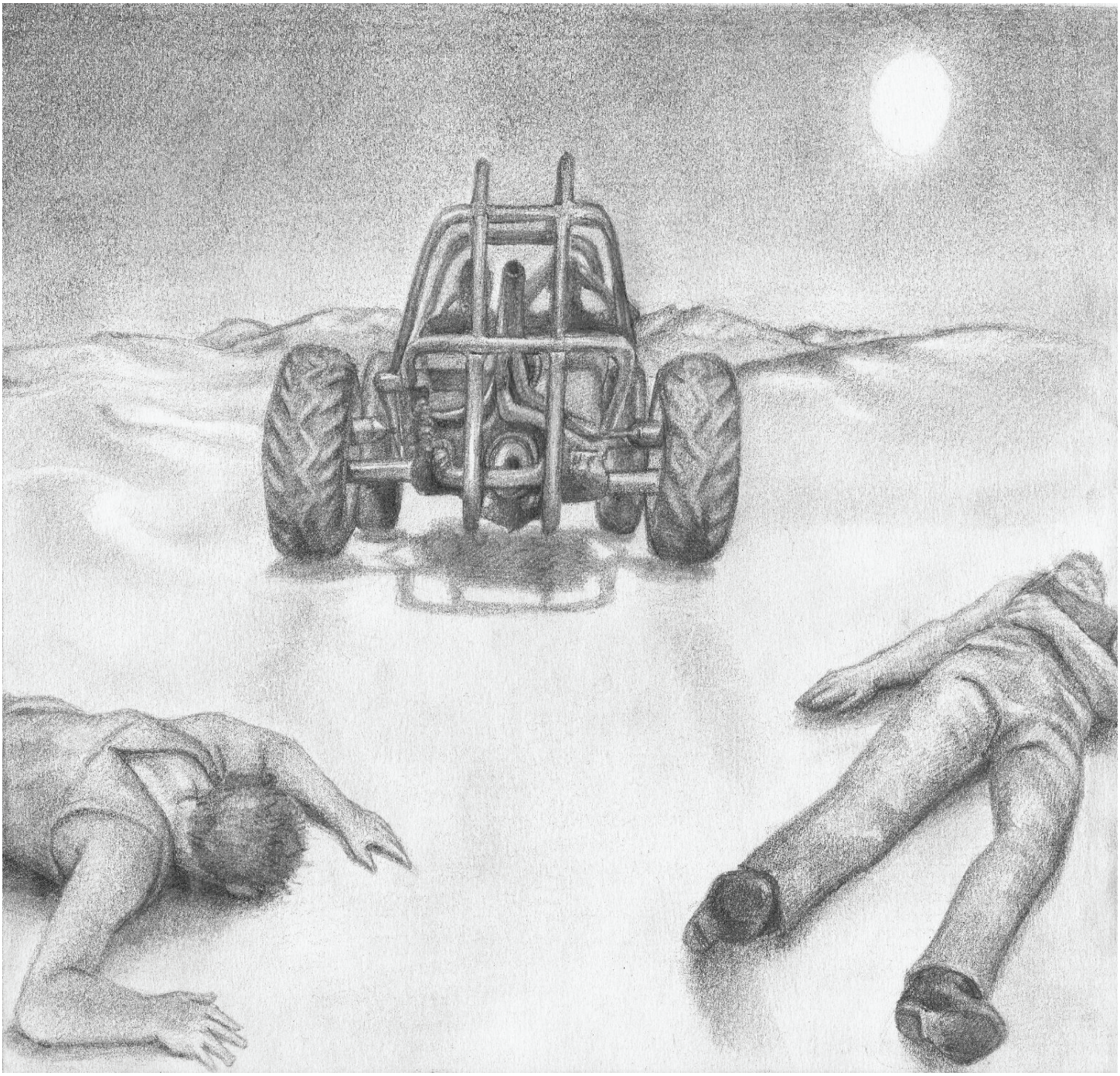
Let's make hay? That was the best that moron could come up with? Pathetic. I smiled at him, took him by the hand. I climbed the thin ladder and watched Deputy One follow closely. I climbed down inside the tank slowly. I found a nice dark corner so I couldn't see the nasty fucker's tiny dick. He rushed toward me, tried to plant one on me. I turned my head and giggled

With my left hand, I found the gasmask connected to one of the tubes of oxygen. “Come here and give me that kiss,” I whispered to him. He giggled and pushed his face into mine.

I ducked to one side and placed the gasmask on his face. He jerked back slightly, mumbled something inaudible. Before he realized what was happening, I already turned the oxygen lines on. They hissed and popped.

I heard him struggle, began screaming. There was nothing he could do. I turned the knob all the way to ten. Deputy One was stuck to the gasmask, his lungs taking in five meters of oxygen. In mere seconds he had lost consciousness. I heard a pop. He fell in the slim sunlight that came from the open hatch of the tank. The gasmask was full of his blood.

I tossed Deputy One to the ground before I lowered myself out of the tank. I saw Deputy Two lying face down, the top of his head had been melted by his own flash gun that Miriam had in his belt.



"I see you scored too," I said.

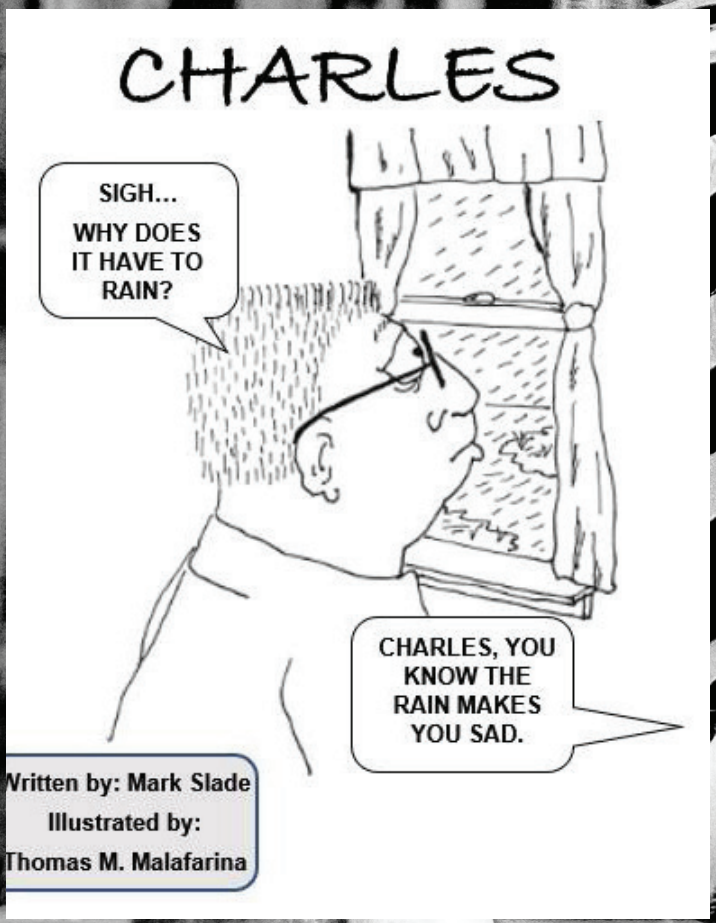
Miriam had a satisfied look on his peeked face. "You don't know half the story, sister," He smiled sheepishly.

"C'mon, you shit-picker," I yelled at him and climbed in the dune buggy. Miriam sat in the seat behind me, found a pair of goggles. "That fucker Gav can come out here and kickstart the Glorious Ninth!"

With that we sped away in a whirlwind from the shores of Maine and headed toward Old Boston, leaving behind us two dead State Imperial Police officers and cloud of black dust.

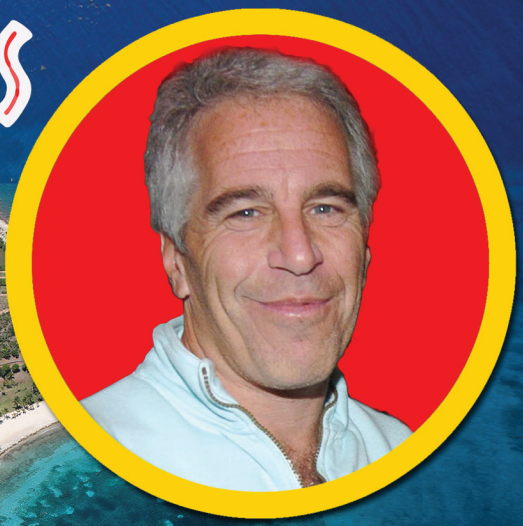
END

MALADJUSTED CARTOONS BY THOMAS MALAFARINA


CHARLES
SIGH... WHY DOES IT HAVE TO RAIN?
CHARLES, YOU KNOW THE RAIN MAKES YOU SAD.
Written by: Mark Slade
Illustrated by:
Thomas M. Malafarina

JEFFTOPIA RESORTS

Like my friend jeff says, "you can't have too much fun!"



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* Legal Representation
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THE BUTTONFACE BEWILDERMENT

				2	5	4	8	
2	5	8	4		1			7
			8				9	
		1	5	4		8		
8		7				2		4
	2	5		7	8	1	6	3
3	4							
5	1			6	4	3		
	8				3	9	4	

STEPHEN KING BOOKS WORD SEARCH

M D J O S Y V X R T E V E G F F T H F E
L S E S N B R G G R P N S I U S O T S P
Y K C A O R H A H X I M R S V Z L H O R
L D P D D R X Y T T J E M L W D S T X U
U X H M K Z A G S A S U F R G D M K S V
T Y K E T X O I V T M B V X P T E W R S
L C E O V H R N A U O E X G O N L C O G
V M T Y I H S R E D M J S L X Q A Q U Y
R C R K C H T X U E U W R T J P S W I R
F R E N I E U C Y S Q P O E E A E S H L
X T M N R D P R A P W M C A G P I V E T
D C I M D R M L H E D A R K T O W E R A
Y N V K N U J M F R M A S H G I F L W L
G R E M A G S D L A R E G E I R R A C I
G K E I T E N L A T K I E B Q C E S B S
Q F W S S C E M A I L N U P N E Q Y C M
Q U Y S I C G V L O U L A S R E C A M A
T S P Q T M O T I N L M G J E Z W H E N
W N Q Q H D O W V E R C U J O W A I D B
C H V J X Y G M Z T Y H F K X Q M T U O

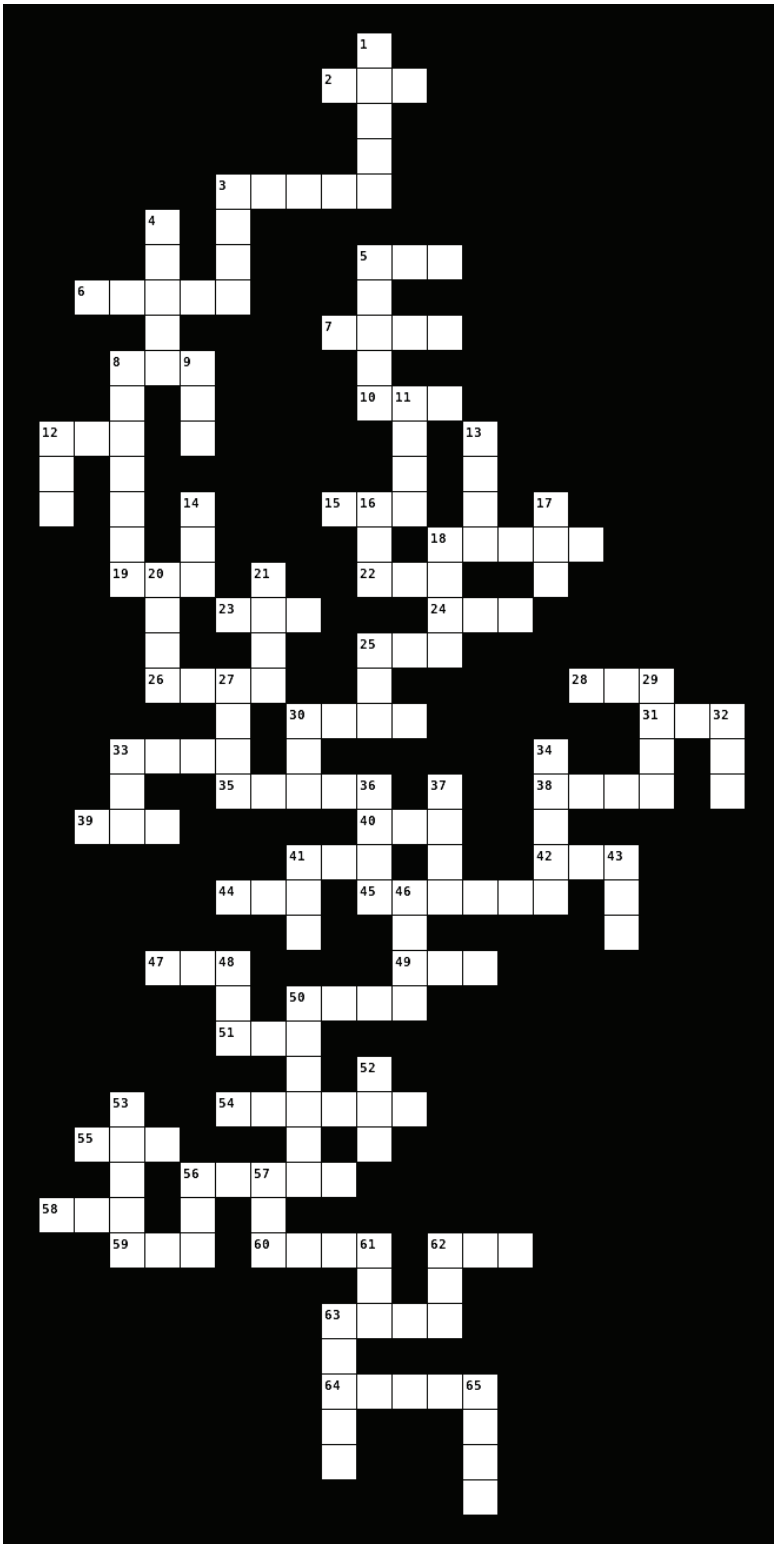
CARRIE
CELL
CHRISTINE
CUJO
DARKTOWER
DEADZONE
DESPERATION
FIRESTARTER
GERALDSGAME
MISERY
PETSEMATARY
SALEMSLOT
SHINING
STAND
TALISMAN

Across

2. Horror actor ___ Atkins
3. Mr. Lee to his friends
5. Ghost hello
6. The last girl in 70s and 80s horror
7. Don't do this from grace
8. ___ Lee
10. Common street name
12. Kong kind
15. Fred's fedora
18. "Summer of _____"(2014)
19. A sure fire way to die in an 80s horror film
22. One of these for one of these
23. Logan's nickname for everyone
24. Comic Baddy
25. Some of the worst and best music of all time
26. "____ Behind" with Nicolas Cage or Kirk Cameron
28. What found footage films use
30. Disagreeably damp, musty, and typically cold
31. Use this for stabbing
33. Mr. Cushing to his friends
35. Lovecraft Sea God
38. What one does at the threshold
39. The Great ___, The Secret of NIMH
40. Look up and you might see me
41. Dracula's other look
42. Bond
44. Anger
45. The smell of death
47. Sound of an eyeball leaving
49. A big-ass shark
50. ____ Niggurath
51. An Anaconda is one
54. The worst day of the week to camp at Crystal Lake
55. The jaws or throat of a voracious animal
56. Frank's monster's actor's first name.
58. Terrible TV show based on James Patterson book
59. Opposite of Pos.
60. Last name of Candyman actor
62. Paranormal G-man
63. First name of Pinhead Actor
64. Chest Burster

Down

1. Doug _____ , actor, contortionist and mime
3. ____ Kolchak, The Nightstalker
4. Mr. Price to his friends
5. Super Vamp
8. "_____ Creepers" (2001)
9. Lebowski gives this to the Dude
11. "____ House on the Left"(1972)
12. Deadite destroyer
13. The Canaanite god
14. "___work" (1988)
16. Chop, chop
17. Silent film monster star
18. Dracula Actor
20. The love of money is the root of it
21. A group of like minded people
25. Ra's symbol
27. Friendly term for the man of your dreams
29. Michael's Disguise
30. ____ your own grave
32. What looking at Eldritch gods will turn you
33. Place knees here
34. Mick and Joe
36. Norman Bates mental condition



37. Legends
41. Do this for death or life
43. ___-Sothoth
46. "Blood from the Mummy's ____" (1971)
48. Where Shaun hides from zombies
50. Special Effects Master and "Sex Machine"
52. The first vampire actor on film
53. Mr. Voorhees
56. "____ of Eternal Stench"
57. Happens to a burried body
61. Commonly dynamic
62. The place ghost pirates come from
63. It comes for us all
65. Gritty Tec Tales

Contributors

Thomas M. Malafarina is an author, musician, singer-songwriter, cartoonist, engineer, and needless to say, a very busy man.

Mark Slade is the co-creator of the radio show Twisted Pulp Radio Hour and sometimes writes books and stories. He lives in Williamsburg, VA with his wife and daughter, and a Chihuahua that dreams of eating a house made of buttery popcorn.

Cameron Hampton is a Masters Circle Member of the International Association of Pastel Societies, earning her Gold Medal in the spring of 2007. She is a painter, photographer, sculptor, cinematographer, animator, and illustrator. Hampton attended both Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, and The Atlanta College of Art (now The Savannah College of Art and Design) in Atlanta, Georgia. Also, she has studied independently in Austria, Belgium, The Netherlands, Slovakia, England, and Hungary where she lived. Hampton has worked in corporate and private collections throughout the world and has been represented by galleries in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, Atlanta, Georgia, and Albuquerque, New Mexico to name a few. She now works and spends time in Georgia, U.S.A., London, England, and Utrecht, The Netherlands. Her work is currently represented by Carré d'Artistes in Mexico City, Mexico.

Amanda Turco lives in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada, where she works at the local library. Her artwork has appeared in Black Lantern Publications: A Macabre Journal of Literature and Art, Stray Branch, Nightmare Illustrated, and several publications for Horrified Press.

DB Spitzer is an artist/podcast producer from Portland, OR. In his spare time, he makes funny voices and builds bizarro instruments from junk.

Dubba Daddly was born and raised in a barn by two horses Ed and Edwina. He left home and traveled the world riding in a supermarket trolley pulled by two wolves. He was once deported from Finland because he insisted E.T. was his Uncle and he had magical powers.

Phillip Lester Seymour Hoffman Bangs died as he lived, sitting on the toilet writing his next ten articles. He had a massive heart attack simultaneously defecating as he finished an article on the last hour of Elvis Presley.

Rob Lowe (not that Rob Lowe) started his writing career doing reviews for porn. He goes to Chuck E Cheese once a week for their lunch buffet where he has had the high score for Skee Ball for over 2 years. Often fights parents of kids who come close to beating his record. Has been on several blind dates but when women find out it's not The Rob Lowe they leave. He once met George Clooney by accident when he walked in on him in the bathroom at a Petco, When Rob isn't writing, he spends his free time playing Nintendo and eating pixie sticks. His mother hates doing his laundry.

Kara Kittrick is a bipolar transgender communist lesbian vampire. She lives in Seattle and writes evil stories full of irony and malice. She studied literature at UC Santa Barbara and currently works as a copywriter. She likes cats. She also likes you. Yes, you: The person reading this. You are awesome.

Chauncey Haworth is a fan of horror, garage rock, pulp writing, toys, and cartoons, drawing pictures, comic books, movies, weird paranormal stuff, electronic music, radio, random collecting, and discarding, as well as his wife and children… not necessarily in that order.

Lothar Tuppan is a writer, audio drama producer, voice actor, and oral storyteller. In addition to the original audio dramas The Sword of the Crimson Tatters and The Dagazian, he co-created the audio drama Daniel Dread with Mark Slade. To his eternal shame he is also responsible for bringing the abomination Dr. Mary Von Rocksprocket into this dimension (and the Twisted Pulp Radio Hour radio show) via unholy rituals involving barrels of bourbon, goats, and radioactive Twinkies.

Dr. Mary Von Rocksprocket is a mad scientist who we—the editorial staff of Twisted Pulp Magazine and the producers of Twisted Pulp Radio Hour—have kept trapped in an underground bunker within a post-apocalyptic pocket dimension. His "handler" Tiffany keeps him distracted while he pays his debts to society by hosting radio shows and writing psychotic submissions to otherwise completely reputable periodicals.

Buttonface is a psychiatrist that enjoys searching for Midian in his off hours.

Letters

Dear editors and staff,

I am a mother of three and my eldest son is 13. I was recently cleaning his room and found this filthy magazine! You guys have the nerve to put this kind of stuff out! I immediately punished him as soon as I flipped through it.

However, later that night I found an article that kind of tickled my bean a little. Let's just say I found it quite erotic. I haven't felt this hot and heavy since my husband left me for a meth dealer over three years ago. Anyhow, I would like to subscribe to you guys under my name from here on out. Thank you for invigorating my life and making me feel like a woman again.

Love,

Bob Thurman

Dear Bob,

If I had dime for evertime I heard that exact same story I'd... well, let's just put it this way. I'd have one dime.

Editorial Staff

Dear Editors,

I am not bowled over by zine. Yes. Zine. As in fanzine. In no way is it professional, smart, or funny. I do not understand any of the so-called jokes, nor is any of the writing better than a four month old mentally challenged orangutan. The art in it is so-so. The font hurts my eyes and the basic white background is ludicrous.

However the spine of your book calms me down and the paper used to print on excites me to no tomorrow. Kudos for that.

I would love to come your houses and discuss the magazine further. Just to let you know, I am very good at getting around locked doors and alarms of all kinds.

Sincerely,

Charles scrotembreath De'Barre III.

Dear Bob,

Looking forward to you stopping by and the boys in Research & Development will be very pleased to hear that all that work they put into the spine achieved the desired effect.

Editorial Staff

Puzzle Answers

Across
2 = Tom
3 = Chris
5 = boo
6 = final
7 = fall
8 = jet
10 = elm
12 = ape
15 = hat
18 = Blood
19 = sex
22 = eye
23 = bub
24 = lex
25 = ska
26 = left
28 = cam
30 = Dank
31 = arm
33 = Pete
35 = Dagon
38 = Lurk
39 = owl
40 = UFO
41 = Bat
42 = spy
44 = Ire
45 = Stench
47 = pop
49 = meg
50 = Shub
51 = boa
54 = Friday
55 = maw
56 = Boris
58 = zoo
59 = neg
60 = Todd
62 = Fox
63 = Doug
64 = Alien

Down
1 = Jones
3 = carl
4 = Vince
5 = Blade
6 = Jeepers
9 = toe
11 = last
12 = ash
13 = baal
14 = wax
16 = axe
17 = Lon
18 = Bela
20 = Evil
21 = cult
25 = sun
27 = fred
29 = mask
30 = dig
32 = Mad
33 = pew
34 = Clash
36 = nuts
37 = Lore
41 = beg
43 = Yog
46 = Tomb
48 = pub
50 = Savini
52 = Max
53 = jason
56 = bog
57 = rot
61 = duo
62 = fog
63 = Death
65 = Noir

9	7	3	6	2	5	4	8	1
2	5	8	4	9	1	6	3	7
1	6	4	8	3	7	5	9	2
6	3	1	5	4	2	8	7	9
8	9	7	3	1	6	2	5	4
4	2	5	9	7	8	1	6	3
3	4	6	2	8	9	7	1	5
5	1	9	7	6	4	3	2	8
7	8	2	1	5	3	9	4	6

TWISTED PULP

MAGAZINE